



THE BEST PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE YEAR

STARTING ON PAGE 11

Brian Vines
meets flora
and fauna
at the
Bird Review

Ministers plot to challenge Blair

SENIOR CABINET members are to challenge Tony Blair over the direction he intends to take the Government after Peter Mandelson's resignation.

The *Independent* has learnt that some senior cabinet ministers plan to use the departure of the chief architect of the "New Labour project" as a cue for reassessment. They are already holding private discussions over the future direction of the Government.

The revelation comes as Mr Blair flew out with his family to the Seychelles last night for a new year holiday. He had considered cancelling the trip but

BY COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

was urged not to by colleagues. "He's tired and needs a break," said a key minister.

He left behind smouldering divisions within the Cabinet after insisting in a BBC radio interview that the "New Labour project" would continue without Mr Mandelson because it was "bigger than any individual".

Mr Blair's remarks were intended to distance him from Mr Mandelson. He told colleagues: "Peter will not be happy." But it emerged that Mr Mandelson had spent Wednesday night at

Chequers with Mr Blair after announcing his resignation.

That left cabinet colleagues confused about the Prime Minister's intentions about Mr Mandelson, and some cabinet ministers saw Mr Blair's remarks yesterday as an open challenge to them.

Accepting the pivotal role Mr Mandelson played in modernising his party, Mr Blair said: "There will be a certain number of people who will be foolish enough to think that Peter's going means that somehow there's some blow to the project of New Labour." But he insisted: "That goes on. We got

elected as New Labour, we'll govern as New Labour." And he said his promotion of three modernisers - Alan Milburn [Chief Secretary to the Treasury], Stephen Byers [Trade and Industry], and John Denham [Health minister] - was a further signal that the modernisers remain on top.

Another cabinet source said: "We support New Labour policies but we are very opposed to this Liberal-Gladstonian agenda. We are not talking about going back to the old Labour. But we want to get rid of the froth of the spin doctors."

One sticking point is the

closer relations with the Liberal Democrats, as part of the anti-Tory project associated with Mr Mandelson. If this is reversed it could leave Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, exposed.

Cabinet ministers said to be

opposed to coalition include Jack Straw, the Home Secretary; David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education and Employment; the Chancellor, Gordon Brown; and John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister. Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, is also said to be opposed.

Robin Cook, the Foreign Sec-

retary and a leading PR supporter, is also seeking to strengthen his alliances in the Cabinet. He spoke to colleagues last week in search of support before the publication of a book by Margaret Cook, his ex-wife.

The Chancellor was under in-

creasing pressure to dismiss Charlie Whelan, his spin doctor, suspected by the Mandelson camp of leaking details of the £373,000 loan to Mr Mandelson from Geoffrey Robinson, the former paymaster-general, which led to their resignations.

Robert Harris, best-selling author of *Fatherland* and a close friend of Mr Mandelson,

disclosed yesterday that he had considered buying a house in London with a flat for Mr Mandelson - which could have avoided the rumpus over his Notting Hill house - but opted for a place in the country.

Sources said Mr Mandelson would pay back the loan to Mr Robinson with interest "early in the new year" using money from his mother and his family. He could still be in trouble over his mortgage application for failing to disclose the secret loan. He has written to the Britannia Building Society, from which he borrowed an extra £150,000, setting out his finan-

cial arrangements and asking for its views.

His friends said he is considering making a personal statement to the Commons when it returns next month, but did not want retribution against the Brown camp. The Chancellor checked over the content of Mr Mandelson's resignation letter with him. A spokesman said: "They spoke three or four times on Wednesday. Gordon came back with a few changes. As far as the relationship with Gordon, it is fine."

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Nine die as war looms in Kosovo

BY RUPERT CORNWELL

Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) have acquired new arms, including anti-tank weapons which KLA spokesmen claim knocked out seven Serb tanks and 12 armoured personnel carriers in the first day of fighting.

In retaliation Yugoslav officials announced their forces would continue operations around Obranca at least until after yesterday's planned funeral of a Serb farmer whose body was discovered on Saturday.

Milovan Radovic, one of the last remaining Serbs in the village, was shot dead at his home, according to the Serb Media Centre, in what was "another crime committed by Albanian terrorists aimed at creating an ethnically all-Albanian Kosovo".

Unlike the previous fighting, which was blamed on the security forces of the Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milosevic, international officials say both sides have breached the ceasefire to the point where it is difficult for OSCE to continue its work. Both sides have gone looking for trouble and they've found it," Mr Walker was quoted as saying. If the Serbs and Albanians did not want to keep their commitments then there was not much 2,000 unarmed monitors (of whom 600 are deployed) could do about it.

Once again Albanian refugees are fleeing villages caught up in the fighting. This time they are doing so in sub-zero temperatures.

Can anyone keep the peace?

Review page 4



Princes Street in Edinburgh yesterday. Retailers said shoppers were staying away from the sales because they feared redundancy

David Moir/Newsflash

Sales prove to be damp squib

BY KATE WATSON-SMYTH

THE CHRISTMAS sales began yesterday but shoppers were unable to find the spectacular bargains they were hoping for. Many said they had been lured by the promise of massive price cuts but were disappointed at the range of discounts on offer.

Pre-Christmas business was slower than expected and retailers were hoping that customers would make up for it at the sales. But the traditional scrum of expectant shoppers was missing.

the first through the doors to snap up the best prizes. Yesterday morning, however, there were only a few early starters waiting for the shops to open and no sign of mass sales fever.

Sharon Gleeson, who waited outside Selfridges in central London, was disappointed by the sale. "I got here early hoping to get a bargain but I just don't think there are any this year. All the stores just seem to have knocked 20% off items," she said.

The BRC's Ann Grain said

stores were aware of the lack of consumer confidence. "Retailers' hopes are that the story of last year will be repeated, in the sense that until after 21 December sales were very slow and then picked up," she said.

"Consumers are much more cautious. There may have been three interest rate cuts but there were six rises before that and people have this fear of depression around the corner. There are redundancies around and people are thinking 'I could be next'."

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Quote
Ref: H04



A RISE in the number of murders by "hit-men" in Britain is linked to more gratuitous violence in Hollywood films, according to one of Britain's most senior policemen.

Roy Penrose, the director-general of the National Crime Squad (NCS), believes gun-toting characters played by stars such as Bruce Willis, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone have encouraged criminals and society in general to become blasé about killing. He said the use of hit-men was a "growing issue" nationally.

He also said that the Gov-

BY JASON BENNETT
AND JOHN DAVISON

ernment's handgun ban, provoked by the Dunblane massacre, had no effect on the supply of firearms to criminals in the UK. Automatic weapons were being smuggled in and were still freely available.

Mr Penrose became the first director-general of the NCS, which has 1,450 officers, when it was set up in April to combat organised crime nationally and internationally.

He says screen violence and fire-power has led to a desensi-

tisation of people towards guns and shooting. "I'm conscious of seeing the *Death Wish* [films], Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Bruce Willis - those sort of big macho-type people - shooting bloody great guns," he said. "I believe that society has become more tolerant of violence and has some appetite for violence."

He argued the combined effects of drugs, money and the glorification of guns and violence meant that if someone said: "Here's £10,000. Go and blow that geezer away," they just do it - it appears to be cheap."

Police are notoriously reluctant to discuss contract killing, but Scotland Yard sources admit that "hits" have risen steadily in the past five years. Detectives from the Yard's Organised Crime Group estimate there are up to 20 hit-men operating in London alone, with prices ranging from £1,000 to £20,000 depending on the target.

Most contract killings are between rival crime gangs, increasingly in disputes over drug deals. However, a number have involved businessmen disposing of rivals or partners, and even husbands and wives getting rid of an unwanted spouse.

Last month a financial adviser to one of London's most powerful underworld gangs was shot dead on his doorstep by a hit man. Solly Nahome, 48, a diamond dealer, was killed as he returned to his family home in Finchley, north-west London.

In September, Peter Morris, 52, a civil engineer from Wolverhampton, was jailed after admitting soliciting the death of his wife. He paid an undercover policeman a £5000 downpayment for the "hit" after a neighbour with whom he had shared his plans went to the police.

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IN THE INDEPENDENT TOMORROW

'I've lost the editorship and it feels like death'

**MORE THAN 20 NATIONAL NEWSPAPER EDITORS HAVE LOST THEIR JOBS IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS.
FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM IN TUESDAY'S MEDIA SECTION**

THE BEST WRITING, WEEK IN, WEEK OUT: DEBORAH ROSS, HOWARD JACOBSON, HAMISH MCRAE, ROBERT FISK, TERENCE BLACKER, JOHN WALSH, RICHARD WILLIAMS, DAVID AARONOVITCH, ANNE MCILVOY, THOMAS SUTCLIFFE, MILES KINGSTON, SUE ARNOLD, ANDREAS WHITIAM SMITH

Mandelson made mistake, says Blair

THE PRIME MINISTER said yesterday that Peter Mandelson had "made a mistake" in not declaring a £273,000 loan from a fellow minister, and "paid a very heavy price for it".

But, in his first comments since Mr Mandelson resigned from the Cabinet over the loan from the former paymaster-general, Geoffrey Robinson, Tony Blair pledged that the New Labour project would carry on without him. "It's bigger than any individual," Mr Blair told BBC Radio. "He made a mistake, he did something wrong, and he paid a very heavy penalty for it."

"What is important now is that we keep a sense of perspective about it. The Government goes on, we move on, and the New Labour programme, the New Labour Government, remains in place and we carry on delivering on our promises."

Mr Blair said Mr Mandelson

BY COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

had "insulated himself" as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry from his department's inquiry into the business dealings of Mr Robinson, but taking a loan from him while in Opposition was "a misjudgment".

The loan was "not a wise thing to have entered into" but what was wrong, said Mr Blair, was that when the DTI inquiry was launched "it would have been wiser to have disclosed it".

Mr Blair confirmed that he only found out about it "two or three days" before Mr Mandelson resigned, on the day he made a statement to the Commons on the air strikes in Iraq.

"I wanted to be absolutely sure there had been no breach of the wall between what he was doing in the DTI and what Geoffrey Robinson was doing. The mistake was made. It was

wrong. It was a misjudgment. Let's get it in perspective."

"In the end he did not attempt in any shape or form to abuse his position in relation to Geoffrey Robinson..."

Mr Blair insisted the affair was not an "earth-shattering" losing pilot over the Gulf or entering an economic downturn and having to raise interest rates would have been earth-shattering, he said.

"We both took the view that in the end, even though there had been nothing wrong in the sense of any interference with the inquiry into Geoffrey Robinson, none the less it was a serious misjudgement, it was a mistake and it was wrong not to have told the Permanent Secretary at the time of this arrangement and therefore it was right that he go."

Mr Blair was pressed over why he had not asked Mr Mandelson, whom he has described

as a friend, how he could afford such an expensive house. He replied: "I really don't go round asking my cabinet members how they paid for their house."

And he added: "Peter, whatever else you say about him, could have earned many more times the money outside of politics than he did inside."

Mr Blair dismissed claims he should have sacked Mr Robinson months ago, saying there was no conflict of interest until this latest affair. "If he had acted in breach of the ministerial code then of course I would have acted."

Had there been any evidence that Mr Mandelson had interfered with the inquiry into Mr Robinson, that would have put the affair into a "different bracket altogether", he said.

Mr Blair denied he had dithered, insisting he had acted faster than other prime ministers in similar circumstances.



Mandelson: 'Did something wrong and paid a very heavy penalty' Stefan Rousseau

**■ PLUS CAN CORNWALL SURVIVE THE ECLIPSE?
■ WITH MEDIA & ARTS**

Tories seek inquiry on free flights

CALLS WERE made last night for Peter Mandelson to resign as an MP after it was confirmed he had accepted undeclared free trips from a millionaire with a big US franchise in the travel trade, writes Colin Brown.

Mr Mandelson's aides confirmed the former secretary of state for trade and industry had taken free flights on the private jet of Linda Wachner, the head of Warnaco, an American clothing conglomerate.

Mr Mandelson's spokesman said the trips were made in "a personal capacity". "It was nothing to do with his work at the DTI. That's the reason it was not disclosed in the Register of Members' interests, which only requires declarations relating to your work as an MP. This trip was paid for by her, out of her own personal bank account, not her company, and that was nothing to do with the DTI."

The shadow Chancellor, Francis Maude, said the Tories would ask the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards to investigate.

Hurricane-force winds kill four



Workmen clearing up in Glasgow city centre Reuters

FOUR PEOPLE, including a small boy, were killed, one man is missing, feared dead and thousands of homes have been left without electricity after hurricane-force winds of up to 110mph lashed Britain and Ireland yesterday.

As the emergency services cleared up, weathermen predicted more severe weather would affect the western parts of Britain from tonight for 48 hours.

Among those who died was Mark Huxley, 56, whose mother's car hit fallen branches then careered across the road, colliding with another car in North Wales.

Mark's mother Gillian Huxley of Whitchurch, Shropshire, was injured and was taken to Wrexham Maelor Hospital for treatment.

A 28-year-old man was swept out to sea by a 30ft wave as he went for a swim in Brighton. Police said the victim had been out for a stroll with his 41-year-old girlfriend and her 21-year-old son when he decided to dive into the sea off Palace Pier. His body was spotted later by res-

cuers in a helicopter using an infra-red camera but it was considered too risky to try a recovery.

At Ashburton in Devon, Paul Witt, 44, was swept away as he stumbled into the rising waters of the River Ashton at the bottom of his garden. His body was found a mile downstream at the village of Peartree.

In Ireland 160,000 homes were left without power at one stage. Michael Joyce, 26, died when a falling tree crushed his car near the village of Maam Cross, at Connemara, County Galway. His girlfriend, a passenger, escaped unharmed.

In Northern Ireland a 24-year-old motorist was killed on the Belfast Road, Comber, Co Down, when his car crashed into a tree in the road.

A 16-year-old girl was flown to the Scottish mainland by helicopter with serious head injuries after being hit on the head by a chimney stack blown off a roof in Rothesay on the Isle of Bute.

BRITAIN TODAY

Noon today

FORECAST

OUTLOOK

KEY

14 Temperature, °C
30 Wind speed, mph and direction

14 Wind speed, mph and direction

Embryo created from four animals

HYBRID EMBRYOS created by using the cells of two different species have been developed by scientists who believe the research could lead to new ways of human cloning.

This is the most compelling support yet for controversial claims that scientists created a cloned hybrid embryo by fusing a man's skin cell with a cow's egg cell.

A team of American scientists from a leading animal cloning laboratory have released preliminary findings of a series of experiments in which they gen-

BY STEVE CONNOR
Science Editor

erated early embryos by fusing the cells of four different animal species – including a monkey – with bovine egg cells.

The research, details of which are scheduled to be published early next year in a scientific journal, raises the prospect of using cows' eggs as "incubators" to grow early human embryos, to allow the extraction of vital cells for transplant operations.

Scientists have expressed

interest in the possibility of using bovine eggs for therapeutic cloning – where embryos do not survive beyond 14 days – because of the shortage of human eggs and because it may be ethically more acceptable than using fully human embryos.

Earlier this year an American company, Advanced Cell Technology, which is closely linked to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, have emerged at scientific conferences in America. The experiments indirectly support the claims

of Advanced Cell Technology. Professor First and colleagues Tanya Dominko and Maya Mitalipova successfully produced hybrid embryos by fusing bovine egg cells, which had their own nuclei removed, with cell nuclei taken from the skin cells of sheep, pigs, rats and rhesus macaque monkeys.

Dr Dominko, who now works at the Oregon Regional Primate Research Center in Portland, said the monkey cells were the easiest to use of the four species. "If we can do it with rhesus macaque monkeys,

there is no reason at all to suppose we cannot do it with human cells," Dr Dominko said.

The scientists did not have a licence to transfer the resulting embryos into the womb of female monkeys, but they did transfer some back into sheep, Dr Mitalipova said. "We showed that the embryo implanted and the pregnancy lasted for about 30 days but we could not recover the foetus."

Professor First emphasised that the intention of the research was not to create adult animals but to produce em-

bryos old enough to extract "stem cells", the body's mother cells that develop into the many different types of tissue which can be used for transplant operations.

"They could certainly apply, but they would be turned down at present because of insufficient animal research. We'd need a body of animal work, fully documented, to be done before agreeing this," Dr McLaren said. Professor First's research, when published in the new year, could mark the starting point for licence applications in Britain.

embryologist, said it was conceivable that scientists in Britain may one day be given a licence to create human-animal embryonic clones.

It is the prospect of extracting human stem cells from early embryos and growing the resulting tissues for transplant operations that has resulted in Britain's Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) recommending the use of therapeutic cloning.

Dr Anne McLaren, HFEA member and a distinguished

Cost of spy HQs to stay secret

BY COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

THE SECURITY services, MI5 and MI6, overspent their budgets for luxury headquarters by an alleged £90m, according to a report by a public spending watchdog. But the Prime Minister has stepped in to block publication of the National Audit Office (NAO) report into the building of the London HQs.

This means the truth about the overspending on furniture and fittings may never emerge, as Mr Blair has agreed the report contains sensitive information about the buildings that could harm security.

MI5 moved to its HQ, which was refurbished, at an estimated cost of £265m. MI6's offices cost an estimated £150m, plus £90m for adaptations.

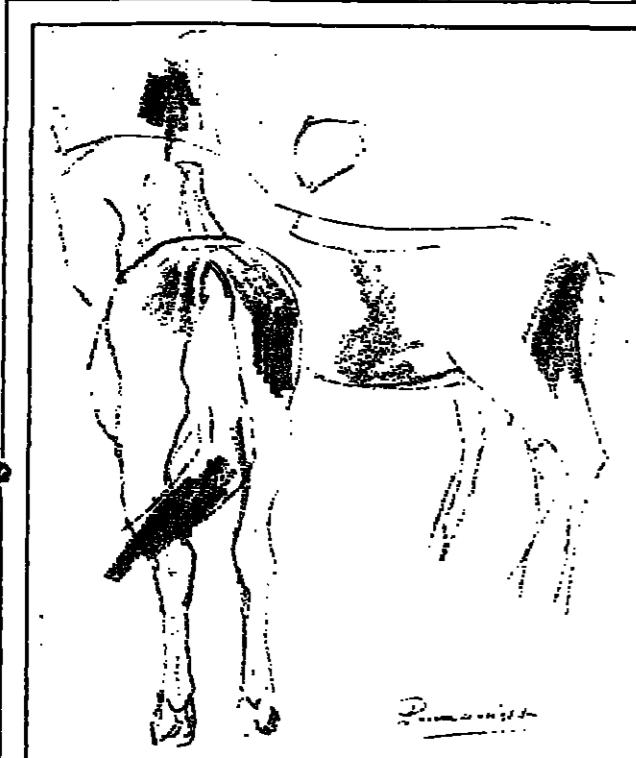
MPs are demanding publication of the report and the release of information that would not harm the intelligence network under the Freedom of Information legislation being drafted by the Home Office.

The Liberal Democrat MP Norman Baker said it was "outrageous" that secrecy laws were being used to hide the cost of carpet for Britain's spies. "I understand there has been a £90m overspend. It is outrageous that this report cannot be published. All material that was sensitive could be taken out, but we're talking about ordinary equipment, like furniture, plants and carpets. And we're talking about public money. There should be accountability," he said.

Mr Baker called on Mr Blair to publish the NAO report in a recent Commons written question, but Mr Blair said: "No. The reports on the purchase and fitting out of Vauxhall Cross (MI6) and Thames House (MI5) contain sensitive information. It is established practice under the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information not to disclose information where disclosure would harm national security or defence."

The issue highlights the growing anxiety of freedom of information campaigners. David Clark, the former cabinet minister for the Cabinet Office, who was in charge of the legislation until being sacked, is worried that the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, will seek a blanket ban on disclosure of all information concerning the security and intelligence services.

The Home Secretary has taken a hard line against those who argue that information should be released unless there is "substantial harm" to national security or defence. He is expected to insist on a wider interpretation of "harm" in the Bill to limit disclosures, and to exclude entirely information about MI6, MI5 and operational details involving the police.



Mark Childers

One of the missing works, 'Circus Horses', by Laura Knight (left), and a vacant space amid the club's collection

BY STEVE BOGGAN

Whistler, Frances Hodgkins, Samuel Palmer and Dame Laura Knight.

The club committee has reported the thefts to its insurers, asked the police to investigate and enlisted Trace, the art-fraud detection agency, but the chairman, David Morris, said initial inquiries had found nothing. "It is very sad, because many of the works were bequeathed or presented to the club by artist members.

"Frankly, I find it curious that so many paintings went missing without anybody doing anything about it. The club was closed for refurbishment from 1974 to 1976. From that period to 1991, somebody appears to have systematically removed pictures."

Suspicion over who is responsible is rife among members of the 18th-century town house in Dover Street. Asked whether he thought the thefts went unreported because

someone in a position of authority was involved, Mr Morris, who was appointed chairman six months ago, replied "Yes."

He has written to the club's 1,000 members – who pay subscriptions of up to £525 – for information on the last whereabouts of the various works.

"Inevitably we are talking in some cases about works being rolled up and walked out after dark," he said.

The thefts were uncovered by Michael Preston, an arts design consultant who was appointed keeper of the pictures in 1991 after an incident in which a former chairman, Lord Aberdeen, saw two of the club's paintings for sale at Sotheby's. The sale was halted and a former club official was dismissed.

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The thefts were uncovered by Michael Preston, an arts design consultant who was appointed keeper of the pictures in 1991 after an incident in which a former chairman, Lord Aberdeen, saw two of the club's paintings for sale at Sotheby's. The sale was halted and a former club official was dismissed.

Although it is not illegal to own goods made from animals such as turtles, alligators or tigers, owners who want to take them out of the country and bring them back have to get an import licence from Cus-

toms and Excise. "This is to stop endangered species being killed, and goods made from them being brought back into the country under the claim that they are antiques," a spokesman said.

Ann Ainslie of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species said: "The agent applied for retrospective permits, which were

refused by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, as the agent knowingly shipped the items without obtaining a permit."

A permit costs £10 per species, so for the sake of £40, the film-maker has lost items worth hundreds of pounds.

The items have given a boost to an exhibition at Merseyside Maritime Museum in Liver-

pool – "Titanic and Lusitania, Floating Palaces of the Edwardian Age". It was relying on a 20th-century model of the Titanic as its main attraction. But the film props are likely to draw bigger crowds.

It is not the first time that the owner of movie memorabilia has been caught out. Gloria Swanson's tigerskin rug suffered the same fate. She gave

the rug to the British novelist Elinor Glyn. When she died, it passed to a relative who wanted to ship it from Los Angeles to her home in Britain – but failed to get an endangered species permit.

After being confiscated, the rug went to the Customs and Excise national museum in Liverpool, where it was renovated and put on display.

15 years of thefts come to light at Arts Club

ONE OF the country's most venerable clubs has come to a painful conclusion after the disappearance of paintings worth up to £1m: it is harbouring a thief among its members and staff.

The Arts Club, whose founding fathers include Charles Dickens and the likes of Mark Twain, Anthony Trollope and Winston Churchill relaxed, has been scandalised by a seven-year audit, which uncovered the apparently systematic theft of 45 paintings – its silverware collection.

Today, Tony Banks, Desmond Wilcox and Nick Serota can be seen there, rubbing shoulders with Malcolm Bradbury and Linda Kitson. And if they got together, the topic of conversation would surely be the theft of the paintings. Among works missing from walls and storage rooms at the club in Mayfair, London, are pictures by John Singer Sargent, Augustus John, Jan van Goyen, James McNeill

Whistler, Frances Hodgkins, Samuel Palmer and Dame Laura Knight.

The club committee has reported the thefts to its insurers, asked the police to investigate and enlisted Trace, the art-fraud detection agency, but the chairman, David Morris, said initial inquiries had found nothing. "It is very sad, because many of the works were bequeathed or presented to the club by artist members.

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The items have given a boost to an exhibition at Merseyside Maritime Museum in Liver-

Customs seize ivory and tortoiseshell 'Titanic' props

MORE THAN 30 props from the film *Titanic* have been confiscated because they are made from endangered species. Among them is the tortoiseshell hair clip worn by Kate Winslet in her nude modelling scene with Leonardo DiCaprio.

The film-maker 20th Century Fox used genuine Edwardian dressing table items, sending them from Britain to Mexico,

BY KEITH ELLIOTT

where filming took place. But when the props were brought back into England, Customs officials at Heathrow airport checked a box and found the items were made from parts of tortoises, elephants, crocodiles and a hippopotamus.

The props include brushes, perfume jars, mirrors, cigar

boxes and cigarette holders. There is a cigar cutter made from a hippopotamus tooth and a book of common prayer with an ivory cover.

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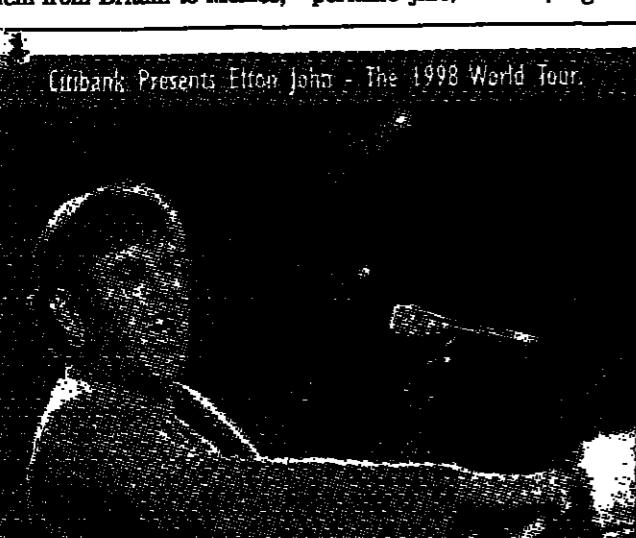
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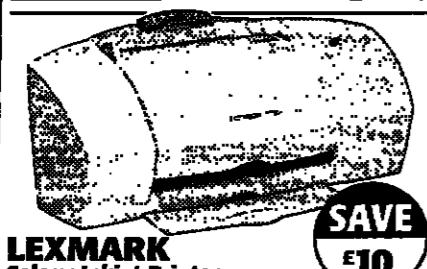
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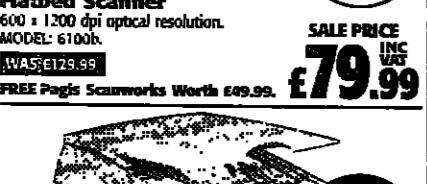


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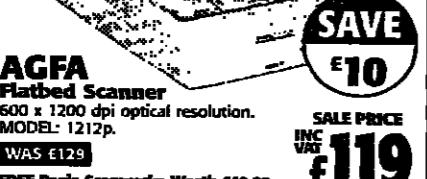
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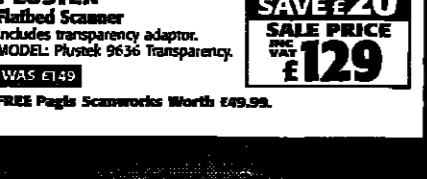
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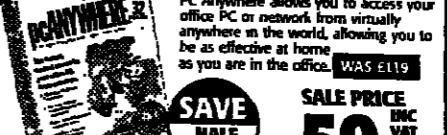
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Teenager is found dead by air crew

BY ANDREW BUNCOMBE

THE BODY of 18-year-old Sally Greig was discovered by police yesterday, four days after she disappeared at the end of a Christmas party.

Police declined to say whether they were treating her death as suspicious until the post-mortem examination had been completed but there was speculation last night that she may have died from natural causes.

Ms Greig, a dental assistant from Perth, was last seen alive in the early hours of Christmas Eve after attending a party with work colleagues at the Huntingtower Hotel on the outskirts of town. Several witnesses who saw her later contacted police to say they had been concerned for her welfare. She was eventually found by a search team in an RAF helicopter yesterday lunchtime. Police had earlier shifted the area of their operation after being contacted by a witness. Ms Greig was formally identified by her parents yesterday afternoon.

At a press conference yesterday in Perth, Detective Superintendent Ian Watson said: "We can confirm that a body



Sally Greig: Witnesses were concerned for her welfare

was discovered at around midday in a field at Newbigging Farm, just outside Perth. An RAF helicopter was able to join the search because of a break in the weather and after an hour the crew spotted the body of a young female lying in a field.

The body, which appears to have been lying there for some time, has not yet been identified but we have scaled down our search and we are awaiting the results of a post-mortem examination and until that happens we cannot say any more about the cause of death. I can say that her clothing was intact."

Det. Supt. Watson said a woman matching Ms Greig's description had been noticed walking alone along an unclassified road at about 12.30am on Christmas Eve by a local woman who was driving with her family. He said the driver had spoken to the young woman after becoming concerned that she was alone at such a late hour.

A spokeswoman for Tayside Police said: "Information received overnight has suggested that Sally may have wandered off along an unclassified road near to the Huntingtower Hotel."

Earlier her parents, Brian and Barbara, had spoken of their growing concern for their daughter. Mr Greig said: "We obviously want to find out Sally's whereabouts and if there's anything at all wrong for her to contact her mum or her dad or friends, relatives or the police - just for her to get in touch to assure everybody."

"It's out of character for Sally to have done something like this, to have gone missing. So if anyone knows anything at all please come forward."

The family were being comforted by relatives last night.

Therapy trial for cannabis

BY KIM SENGUPTA

TRIALS INTO the therapeutic uses of cannabis are to take place with the official approval of the Government.

The Medical Research Council stated yesterday it would be prepared to rush through funding for the trials, involving more than 1,000 people, provided the necessary legal clearance was obtained from the Home Office and the Medicines Control Agency, the Government's licensing authority for prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

Protocols for the tests will be decided at a meeting on 11 January to be attended by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, the council and the Department of Health. The tests are expected to take place in the spring. The agency will advise the scientists on the legal and regulatory aspects of the trials.

The initial tests are expected to cost up to £500,000 each. A spokeswoman for the council said: "Rather than wait for our normal funding reviews we do have the necessary powers to expedite special payments as in the case of BSE and

IN BRIEF

School security grant 'inadequate'

TEACHERS SAID £22m in grants to improve school security was "inadequate" yesterday. Ministers said the funds were for projects in 14,000 schools next year to pay for schemes such as new fencing, closed-circuit television and staff training. But the teachers' union NASUWT said most schools were still vulnerable to intruders.

Blind pensioner dies after robbery

POLICE RENEWED appeals yesterday for help to catch thieves after the death on Christmas Day of a deaf and blind 93-year-old woman who had been robbed a week earlier. Eileen Harvey died after her Christmas savings of £300 were stolen by tricksters from her home in Portsmouth, Hampshire.

'Nintendo thumb' warning

UP TO three million children playing computer games they were given at Christmas could end up with "Nintendo thumb". And youngsters surfing the Internet could face years of agony from bad posture and repetitive strain injury, said the charity, the Body Action Campaign.



A peregrine falcon in a dive, during which it can reach 115mph John Daniels

Peregrines are fastest bird in world - official

BY BRIAN UNWIN

PEREGRINE FALCONS diving on their prey are the fastest birds in the world, new research using radar has established.

The speed of their dive or "stoop" has been accurately measured for the first time by Swiss scientists, and has been shown to reach 115mph.

The figure is considerably lower than that given in many wildlife books, which say peregrines can attain 250mph, but this, and many other top speeds estimated for fast-flying birds, are now regarded as wildly exaggerated.

It still puts the peregrine well ahead of all its competitors. Its stoop kills prey such as ducks or pigeons outright by sheer impact.

The newly published studies accurately measured peregrines hurtling down at rates of up to 51 metres per second, which equates to 115mph.

Dr Matthias Kestenholz of the Swiss Ornithological Institute, one of the scientists who carried out the research, de-

scribed it as representing "the highest air speed of a bird accurately measured so far".

The peregrines involved in the research were measured with tracking radar, consid-

FLIGHT TIMES

■ The eider, the coast-dwelling duck, has been found to reach a speed of about 47mph, followed by the Bewick's swan (45mph); the common crane and barnacle goose (42mph); the mallard (40mph); and the red-throated diver (38mph).

■ Swifts have been credited with rapid flight but their long, thin wings are not ideal for sustained speed. Common swifts, the species nesting in Britain, have been found to fly at just 25mph.

ered to be the most accurate method. It works on the same principle as police radar guns and locks on to the bird to track its movements.

Peregrines can be seen more easily now in Britain than at any time this century. Although still classed as rare and endangered, there are now estimated to be more than 1,000 pairs - one of Europe's most thriving populations.

Owing to hunting earlier in the century and then the effects of pesticides accumulated from their prey, there were only about 360 pairs in the early 1960s, many of them failing to breed successfully. The recovery followed restrictions being placed on the use of pesticides and it has also been helped by round-the-clock watches of nesting sites to protect them from disturbance.

However, peregrines still suffer problems from nest-robbers, seeking their eggs for illicit collections or young birds for the lucrative overseas falconry trade.

Demonstration carried out at Brno Racetrack, Czech Republic, October '98.

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Europe takes huge leap into unknown

BY HAMISH MCRAE

THIS IS the week when Europe starts its gigantic experiment, the launch of a single currency for 11 members of the European Union.

It will soon be possible, for the first time since the fall of the Roman Empire, to travel from the Channel to the tip of Italy without having to change money.

The patchwork quilt of currencies that Europeans have used in their daily lives for more than 1,500 years is being replaced with a single one. The euro becomes a legal entity on 1 January. It will swiftly replace the national currencies and, within three years, francs, marks, pesetas, lire and so on will have become history.

It is an experiment in the sense that there is no precedent for such an event. There have been currency reforms, of course, where a country has decided to replace an old currency with a new one: Germany has done so three times this century.

Sometimes countries have chosen to link their money to that of a foreign power – many to the United States dollar. There have been attempts by countries to bind their currencies together: there was an attempt at a European currency in the last century, which failed. And there have been occasions when a country has had its own money replaced with a foreign one, usually as a result of conquest, colonisation or some other political shock.

This is, however, the first time that a group of countries

which are not part of a political union and which have not been conquered or colonised have agreed to give up their own currencies for another.

So anything said or written about the launch of the euro, and in particular its political and economic consequences, has to be taken with a pinch of salt. We have to guess; we cannot know. This is a journey without maps.

What we can do is make a stab at gauging some of the effects of this decision. There is one clear political consequence, and a number of less clear economic ones.

Start with the political impact of the new European Central Bank, the body that will "run" the euro. Up to now, the European political institutions have been quite weak. The key decisions supposedly imposed by the Brussels bureaucracy have almost invariably been approved by national governments: power still lies with the ministers of the countries concerned. As for the importance of the European Parliament – well, a quick test: can you name your Euro MP?

Now there is a new institution for Europe. All national countries have some sort of central bank to run their currencies. The recent trend has been to make that central bank more independent of the government, to give it more power. But central banks operate within the framework of a national



There is no precedent for a group of countries that are not part of a political union voluntarily to give up their currencies for another

government: the Bank of England has its independence because that has been given to it by a powerful parliament. The new European Central Bank in Frankfurt has been given its independence too, but the counterpart of the European Parliament is much weaker. In one sense, having a new independent body running the euro compensates for the weakness of other European institutions.

In another sense, Europe has created a new focus of power, sharply reducing the scope for national parliaments to exert their own authority. Remember that Europe is not just getting a single currency. It is getting a single interest rate, too.

That, at least is the theory. If you ask practical questions as to how the European Central Bank will exert its power, the answers are guesses. Will European interest rates be high or low? Will the currency be strong or weak? Will the bank pay more attention to the needs of the countries on the fringe or will the big battalions dominate?

If we do not know what sort of currency the euro is going to be, judging its economic effects is obviously hazardous. But

some things can sensibly be said. For a start, giving Europe a single currency will give a spur to economic integration. The fact that prices are fixed in the same unit will mean that they will tend to converge. Buy a new car in Inverness and it will be pretty much the same price as one in Truro: buy a car in Copenhagen and the price will be very different from one in Seville. Expect those differences to narrow swiftly – and expect the prices to narrow down, not narrow up.

That will have an enormous impact on companies. Those with plants in different countries, with different wage rates and productivity levels, will immediately be able to compare those differences. They will be forced to improve efficiency and Europe's economy will become more competitive as a result.

There will be other effects. We are already seeing the impetus for cross-European mergers; expect that to proceed apace. We are already seeing the impetus for a cross-European tax policy: the single currency will inevitably encourage that process, not because some politicians and officials are determined to impose common taxes, but be-

cause the scale of the differentials will be exposed. The pressure for companies to pay similar taxes across Europe will grow, for if large differentials remain, they will relocate towards the lower tax zones.

The European economy will become more integrated and more efficient. Some parts will benefit; others will find the new burst of competition very tough. The single interest rate will be a particularly powerful discipline. It is not just that some parts will have to operate on interest rates that are too high for their local needs, others

that are too low. It is also that finance will tend to flow towards areas and projects that deliver the highest returns. Investors will think pan-European, rather than in little national boxes. The leaders will bound forward, the laggards will suffer still more.

The fact that investors have a new common zone in which to operate will have one further impact – one that will, if the euro is successful, change Europe's place in the world. Since the Second World War there has been a single global currency standard, the dollar. It has been challenged at times by the yen and the German mark, and in the early post-war years sterling was bracketed alongside. But the dollar has really dominated.

No longer. The euro will be close in value to the US dollar backed by an economy of similar size.

The world's currencies will have two anchors, not one. Will that be a source of tension or will they co-exist happily? Will

people trust the euro?

And therein lies the greatest question of all. Will the euro succeed? History is littered with attempts at currency unions that have failed. I suppose the failure of the sterling area, made up of many members of the former British Empire, is as good an example as any. In fact, there has been no lasting currency union without a political union. So what Europe is attempting is a great daring, romantic leap into the unknown. As for Britain's role or non-role in this experiment, that is another story.

Just three days to get it right ...

ON THURSDAY

Europe's finance ministers will meet in Brussels to set the rates for converting their 11 national currencies into euros.

This will be followed by a champagne reception, but there will be little time to celebrate for 25,000 people in the City of London. As with their counterparts in Europe's financial centres – not to mention many in New York and Tokyo – they will be hunched over their screens, acting as midwife to the euro. For it is in the financial markets that the single currency makes its debut.

The "conversion weekend" begins on Thursday, New Year's Eve, when the staff of the central and investment banks responsible for putting the new currency into practice begin the mad scramble to switch over their computer systems.

They have three days to get it right. Some will grab only snatches of rest on office floors. The markets will reopen on 4 January with every share in the 11 member countries, every government or company bond, each derivative deal and all flows of money between banks and big companies redenominated from marks, francs and lire into euros. Every City bank has put a senior manager in charge of the changeover.

Bronwyn Curtis, handling the transition for Nomura, an investment bank, explains that everybody in the financial world has prepared to the extent of doing trial runs. But, she says: "A lot of it you can't actually do until the last minute."

The conversion will utilise the exact level of all financial market prices at the end of 1998, and the exact conversion rates.

Huge numbers of computer files in virtually every bank on the planet will need to be amended. To add to the diffi-

BY DIANE COYLE

Economics Editor

culties, different ways of rounding numbers can be used. The novelty alone is expected to lead to lots of mistakes.

Some are better prepared than others. The Bank of England, which has published quarterly reports on preparations, is concerned about whether all UK banks have done everything they can to be ready for the crucial weekend.

Not only the financial markets will suffer a last-minute scramble. The treasury departments of all big corporations around the globe, in effect mini-banks themselves, have to make the same kind of computer adjustments.

And in euroland itself, every business from the smallest corner shop to the biggest multinational will have to start converting prices, accounts, wage bills and tax payments into euros. Although national currencies will continue to be legal tender until midway through 2002, when the new notes and coins are due to be in issue, their exchange rate will be "irrevocably fixed" in terms of euros. The citizens of the 11 members will have to become wizards at converting from one to the other.

So will Britons travelling to the euro-11 countries. Travellers will still use the familiar cash, but they will find two differences: shop and restaurant prices will often be shown in both euros and the national currency, and their credit cards will show just euros – with a euro worth around 70p.

Ms Curtis says many in the financial markets did not for a long time expect this project to go ahead at all. "Now it's actually happening. It is very exhilarating – but also frightening."

Euro expected to displace dollar

THE EUROPEAN single currency is expected to appreciate by as much as 10 per cent

against the US dollar in its first year of operation. Central banks, especially in Asia and Latin America, will take the first opportunity for decades to diversify reserves by selling dollars and switching reserves into euros, although European interest rates are below US levels.

A report from the Centre for Economics and Business Research due later this week claims that China alone has more than \$100bn in its reserves and is already on record as wanting to switch to a bi-polar reserve policy. Japan, the world's biggest holder of dollars, might also diversify into

euros. It has suffered recurring heavy exchange rate losses over the years as the dollar has depreciated against the yen.

The euro could also appreciate against the pound, creating a window for the UK to join the European single currency at a lower and more realistic rate than the current 70p – and give UK exporters one final shot in the arm before currencies are fixed permanently.

Upward pressure on the euro as central bankers buy the currency will increase deflationary pressures on European economies, though, as the rising exchange rate prices EU producers out of world markets.

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The Pope: Named among the top four Europeans of influence



Mary Robinson: The highest placed out of only three women



Umberto Eco: 'Name of the Rose' author takes 20th place



Emma Bonino: Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid comes 17th

Blair voted the leading European

TONY BLAIR is the most important person in Europe, according to a survey by *The Independent* of some of the Continent's most powerful and influential people.

Somewhat surprisingly, given his failure to lead from the front in Europe, the Prime Minister is considered more influential than either Wim Duisenberg, head of the new European Central Bank, or Gerhard Schröder, the German Chancellor.

The survey also suggests that Mr Blair's influence should not be underestimated by either the French or Germans. Other European nationalities appear to see the Prime Minister as an effective counterbalance to their haste for European political integration. "He knocked some sense into Labour by his Third Way" said one of the judges, Hans Labohm, of the Netherlands Institute for International Relations.

The survey, thought to be the first of its kind, attracted replies from more than 200 government ministers, politicians, economists, industrialists, leading cultural figures, trade unionists and academics from

the 15 countries of the European Union.

Overwhelmingly, the replies demonstrate that voters regard the politicians with the power to shape the Continent as its most important citizens.

Included in the top 10 are the Pope, the former German chancellor Helmut Kohl and Jacques Delors, former president of the European Commission who was described by John Monks, general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, as "the most effective leader of the European Commission which became a highly creative secretariat".

They are followed by the German Finance Minister, Oskar Lafontaine, the French President, Jacques Chirac; the president of the Bundesbank, Hans Tietmeyer; and the Czech President, Vaclav Havel, who led the so-called "velvet revolution" in 1989. Swedish MEP Per Gahrton described him as "the only president who in office succeeded in preserving some of his dissident soul".

Lionel Jospin, the French Prime Minister, managed only 11th place, one ahead of the

Using a weighted voting sys-

CONTINENT'S TOP 25

1. Tony Blair, British Prime Minister
2. Wim Duisenberg, head of new European Central Bank
3. Gerhard Schröder, German Chancellor
4. The Pope
5. Helmut Kohl, former German chancellor
6. Jacques Delors, former president of European Commission
7. Oskar Lafontaine, German Finance Minister
8. Jacques Chirac, French President
9. Hans Tietmeyer, President, Bundesbank
10. Vaclav Havel, Czech President, led "velvet revolution"
11. Lionel Jospin, French Prime Minister
12. Rupert Murdoch, media tycoon
13. Mary Robinson, UN Commissioner for Human Rights
14. John Hume/David Trimble, Nobel Peace Prize winners
15. Jacques Santer, President, European Commission
16. Mikhail Gorbachev, former Soviet president
17. Emma Bonino, European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid
18. Bill Clinton, US President
19. Bill Gates, head of Microsoft
20. Umberto Eco, Italian author
21. Javier Solana, Secretary-General of Nato
22. Gro Harlem Brundtland, director-general, World Health Organisation
23. Jose Maria Aznar, Spanish Prime Minister
24. Jürgen Schrempp, head of DaimlerChrysler
25. Lord Menin, violinist

term, Mr Blair racked up 1,636 points, giving him a clear margin over his closest challenger Mr Duisenberg, with 1,580. Mr Schröder scored 1,182 points.

Leena Peltonen, Professor of Medical Genetics at the University of Helsinki, gave an insight into why so many found Mr Blair attractive. He is, she

said: "The counterbalance to German politics".

But it was not only politicians and bankers whom our voters considered "important". Among the more exotic nominees were the footballers Ronaldo and Zinedine Zidane, the author Salman Rushdie, the actress Juliette Binoche, Lara Croft, heroine of the computer game Tomb Raider, and the French techno band Daft Punk.

However, most entries which appeared at first sight to be frivolous were accompanied by lucid and rational explanations. For example, David Rock, President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and one of several who nominated Lara Croft in their top 10, wrote: "Ms Croft, the first virtual star, represents the future of the entertainment industry. One should not let her physical non-existence count against her".

And Stuart Etherington, chief executive of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, nominated the transvestite comedian Eddie Izzard because: "His love for all things Euro could be infectious for a cynical UK public."

Catherine Deneuve, the ac-

tress, appeared to attract a large number of votes on purely sexist grounds. Rolf-Dieter Krause of WDR radio in Germany, voted for her "For showing that even women of [some] age can be most attractive."

Giulio Andreotti, the former Italian Prime Minister, had Georgio Armani at number two in his top 10, although he provided no explanation as to why.

Gordon McVeigh, of the Cancer Research Campaign, put makers of Viagra at number one and the creators of Dolly the cloned sheep at number two, while the Danish trade union leader Rune Norgaard put Bono of U2 at number nine and comedian Ruby Wax at 10.

Among the bad guys named were the Serb President Slobodan Milosevic, the French National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marc Dutroux, the Belgian child murderer.

Others who received votes but fell outside the top 25 included Professor Stephen Hawking and Richard Branson.

Perhaps disappointingly, voting patterns sometimes lived up to national stereotypes. Many Germans, for example, concentrated on industrialists and

politicians, while the French were more likely to include actors, artists and sportspeople among their nominees.

One child was nominated;

Carl-Maurice Lafontaine, the baby son of Oskar Lafontaine,

the German Finance Minister.

He was chosen by Dr Christian

Tripp of the German radio sta-

tion Deutsche Welle, who wrote

that Carl-Maurice was "the only

person who can distract his fa-

ther from destroying British

lifestyle and eventually becom-

ing German chancellor..."

■ *The Independent* wrote to

opinion formers and policy

makers in the 15 member coun-

tries of the European Union and

the European Commission in

Brussels, asking just one

question: "Who in your opinion

are the 10 most important peo-

ple in Europe, ranked in order

of importance?" After receiving

200 replies, we weighted the

responses to reflect both the

rankings and how often names

appeared.

Research by *Cathy Mayer*,

Ciar Byrne, *Katherine Griff*

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The Iraqi poet Sajida Al-Musawi reading a poem next to a portrait of President Saddam Hussein in Baghdad yesterday

Sierra Leone rebels march on Freetown

BY ANDREW BUNCOMBE

late for talking and listening."

The rebels are believed to have taken control of Waterloo, a town 12 miles from Freetown. There was also heavy fighting yesterday in Makeni, 60 miles away in the centre of the country. Both sides claimed to have taken control of the town.

Ecomog forces said they had killed 50 rebels in bombing raids on RUF positions. An official at Ecomog's headquarters in Freetown said he expected Nigerian planes to go

close to Freetown indicates a swift reversal in the fortunes of Ecomog, which has been confidently and repeatedly predicting the demise of the RUF for the past 10 months. Mr Bockarie said his forces had killed at least 100 Nigerian troops.

At today's meeting Sir Peter will stress Britain's support of President Kabba. The two men regularly met after the

President was ousted.

"The meeting will attempt to assess the situation. Sir Peter will make clear our support for President Kabba," said a Foreign Office spokesman.

Sir Peter was partly responsible for the involvement of Sandline in February's counter-coup, when arms and equipment were flown to Sierra Leone in breach of sanctions. Sandline's involvement triggered government inquiries into whether the mercenaries were encouraged to act by British officials. The company declined to comment yesterday.

President Kabba was driven from power in May 1997 by Lieutenant-Colonel Johnny Koroma, who established a military junta with the RUF.

The President is refusing to talk to the rebels, who are demanding the release of their leader Foday Sankoh - currently imprisoned and appealing against a death sentence imposed for his role in ousting the President in May 1997.

The Foreign Office said about 50 British nationals remained in Sierra Leone. Some 81 British and other European nationals have been evacuated.



Iraq vows to fire on air patrols

BY JOHN DAVISON

IRAQ REITERATED its defiance of Western military action, saying yesterday it would fire on any warplanes patrolling over its territory.

The statement, referring to flights enforcing the United Nations-imposed "no-fly" zones against Iraqi aircraft in the north and south of the country, could be the start of a new round of confrontation between President Saddam Hussein's regime and British and US air power. The Ministry of Defence has warned that British aircraft will retaliate if attacked. US of-

ficials were giving the same message: "Iraq knows that it should not interfere with those flights, and our pilots can act in self-defence if they feel threatened at any time," a National Security Council spokesman said in Washington.

Two RAF Tornados, on patrol as part of Operation Southern Watch on Saturday morning, reported anti-aircraft fire five miles behind them.

But this was not considered to be any threat and so no ac-

tion was taken. Iraq said it had fired at Western aircraft attacking a post in the south of the country and warned that it would shoot again at any warplane over its territory.

Its version of events was dismissed by both Britain and the US. It is understood that aircraft were again patrolling yesterday, but no incidents were reported.

Taha Yassin Ramadan, Iraq's vice-president, yesterday repeated that his government did not recognise the zones. Iraqi air defences would

"do what they can to confront this violation", he said. "The force of no-fly zones must end. The so-called no-fly zones only exist in the British and American imagination."

The US, Britain and France set up the no-fly zones under a UN mandate in 1991-92 to halt air attacks against Kurdish rebels in the north and Shia Muslim rebels in the south.

French aircraft are said to be reducing their involvement.

Britain is represented by a dozen RAF Tornado GR1 jets based in Kuwait, which took

part in the four-day Operation Desert Fox bombardment of Iraq. Jaguar jets stationed at Incirlik, in Turkey, help to enforce the other zone, over northern Iraq.

Iraq has never recognised the zones and has occasionally confronted aircraft flying in the areas. The last big incident was in June. US officials said

that a US F-16 fired a missile at an anti-aircraft site after Iraqi radar locked on to British planes on patrol.

Iraq denied its forces threatened the British aircraft.

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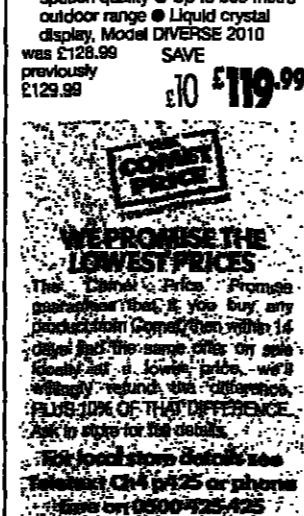
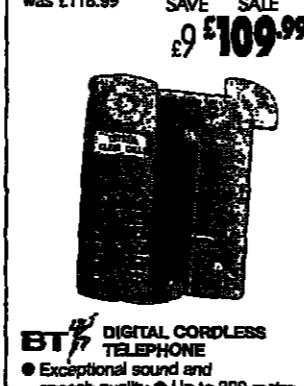
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MAYORS IN French mountain regions are demanding a crackdown on skiing "hooligans" after a series of serious injuries over the Christmas holidays and a disturbing rise in the number of accidents last year.

The mayor of Bresse in the Vosges mountains has gendarmerie on-ski for every slope. Several villages and towns in the French Alps have given the force of law to the "10 commandments" in the safety code of the international skiing federation. The tougher approach follows a 17 per cent increase in the number

of accidents on the French slopes in the 1997-98 season.

There has also been a fracture strewn opening to this season, attributed partly to new equipment, such as mono-skis and ski-boards.

But local officials and ski professionals also report a surge of bad and thoughtless behaviour. "We are in a time of everyone-for-themselves, of selfishness," said Jean-Louis Costerg, president of the

French association of ski-slope managers. "It's a social problem, which starts in the towns, not in the snow."

The stricter public tone was set by the deputy chief prosecutor in Albertville earlier this month, when he called for a three-month jail sentence for a teenager who collided with and killed a 10-year-old boy at Courchevel two years ago. "I intend to be very severe with everyone who thinks they can do whatever they please on the slopes," said René Ternay.

In the event, the court passed a suspended sentence. Guy Vaxelaire, mayor of Bresse, a ski station in the Vosges, called for direct policing of the slopes on Saturday after four serious accidents in the last week.

The Prefect, or chief national government officer, in the Vosges département said he doubted it would be possible.

The increase in injuries is attributed partly to the use of high-performance equipment by relative beginners. The sharpest increase in broken bones has been on the "easier" green and blue slopes.

IN BRIEF

Hostages' bodies identified

THE PROSECUTOR-GENERAL of Chechnya confirmed yesterday that four bodies found in a forest on Christmas Day were those of telecoms engineers from Britain and New Zealand taken hostage and murdered in the region earlier this year. The severed heads of the men were found in west Chechnya on 8 December.

Barbados will go to the polls

THE PRIME MINISTER of Barbados, Owen Arthur, has called a general election on 20 January. Arthur said his ruling National Labour Party would run on its record of improving the economy.

He pledged a "clean, vigorously contested poll" against the opposition Democratic Labour Party.

Aircraft crash blamed on Unita

ANGOLAN STATE radio yesterday accused Unita rebels of shooting down a United Nations plane carrying 14 people near a government-held town that Unita had been shelling for weeks. The C-130 transport plane crashed shortly after taking off from Huambo on Saturday.

Tennis racket killer's plea fails

AN APPEAL court in Kuwait has upheld the conviction of a Kuwaiti woman sentenced to 10 years in jail for beating to death her Asian maid with a tennis racket, the Arab Times reported.

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PICTURES OF THE YEAR

From the horror of wars, the emotion of the World Cup or the simple pleasures of family holidays, this newspaper was home to the most distinctive images of the past 12 months. Here, on the next four pages, are some of the most striking



For a photograph to illustrate a feature on Britons who holiday at home, Tom Pilston of 'The Independent' travelled to Skegness for this timeless scene of family chaos and simple fun. 'It was a July day and – suitably enough – the weather was pretty overcast,' he said



David Rose found this family of Albanian Kosovar refugees fleeing the Serbs along a deserted road last February. He said: 'There was no one for miles around and I felt quite invasive, but it was so important I felt I had to take the photograph.'



The day after Ron Davies resigned as secretary of state for Wales he held a photo-call for the Welsh media. Freelancer Brian Jarrett of the Huw Evans Picture Agency captured the tell-all 'Sorry' scribbled on the politician's hand. 'It seemed to sum up everything,' he said

'It was quite simply devastation on an epic scale,' remembered David Rose of 'The Independent', who photographed this astonishing scene at the Choluteca River in Honduras after Hurricane Mitch ripped through the Caribbean and Central America last month. Homes, hillsides and people were swept away as the hurricane tore apart the countryside. Mitch was the fourth worst hurricane on record and claimed up to 20,000 lives in Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador

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On 7 August, terrorist bombs exploded at the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, attacks that were to result in retaliatory air strikes by America against alleged targets in Sudan and Afghanistan. A total of 224 people were killed by the embassy bombs and more than 5,000 were injured. 'When we heard there had been an explosion I went straight away - I just ran down there,' said Khalil Senosi of the Associated Press Nairobi bureau. 'It was chaos. It was difficult to work because there were so many people there trying to help.'



Above: Young, white, male aggression killed Stephen Lawrence and its ugliness was defined in this moment captured by Paul Hackett of Reuters. The five men, accused by one newspaper of murdering the black teenager, lashed out at those taunting them outside the public inquiry they had to be forced to attend and whose questions they refused to fully answer.

Left: John Edmonds, president of the TUC, was having a laugh during a photo opportunity at the annual conference in September. He wasn't laughing after John Voos of 'The Independent' took this picture, which he felt made him look silly. 'I overheard him the next evening threatening to kill the photographer who took it,' Voos recalled.



Just because each had once led the party did not necessarily mean Baroness Thatcher and Sir Edward Heath were interested in everything being said at the Conservative Party conference, as Paul Bates of Reuters discovered. Perhaps those Ikea chairs were just a little too comfortable



The Scottish team may not have been the greatest footballers at France 98 but their fans were certainly among the most high-spirited. Brian Harris, chief photographer of 'The Independent', came across this bunch celebrating scoring a goal in a friendly kickabout in the shadow of the most famous monument in Paris



Three young friends, James Barker, aged 12, Sean MacLaughlin, 12, and Oran Doherty, 8, all from Buncrana, were among the 29 people killed in the Omagh bomb atrocity in August. Their joint funeral in the small town in Co Donegal was terrible, gut-wrenching and packed with people who came to pay their respects and mark their revulsion at the terrorist attack. On a day when the world's media was out in force, Ian Waldie of Reuters captured this image of a coffin lost in a sea of heads



In April, forest fires raged throughout huge parts of South-east Asia, blanketing the skies with smog. David Loh of Reuters found this terrified girl at Pujut Corner squatters' camp in Malaysia after a fire left hundreds of families without homes



Arrest, questioning and the constant attention of the secret police were all obstacles Tom Pilston of 'The Independent' overcame to take this portrait of the Burmese opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. 'She had tremendous poise, tremendous dignity. She looked like a president-in-waiting,' said Pilston, who then had to smuggle his film out of the country



Bill Clinton will look back on 1998 as one of mixed emotions. David Rose of The Independent took this portrait of the US President on a visit to Northern Ireland where he was feted for helping to broker the peace agreement. From then on, it was downhill all the way

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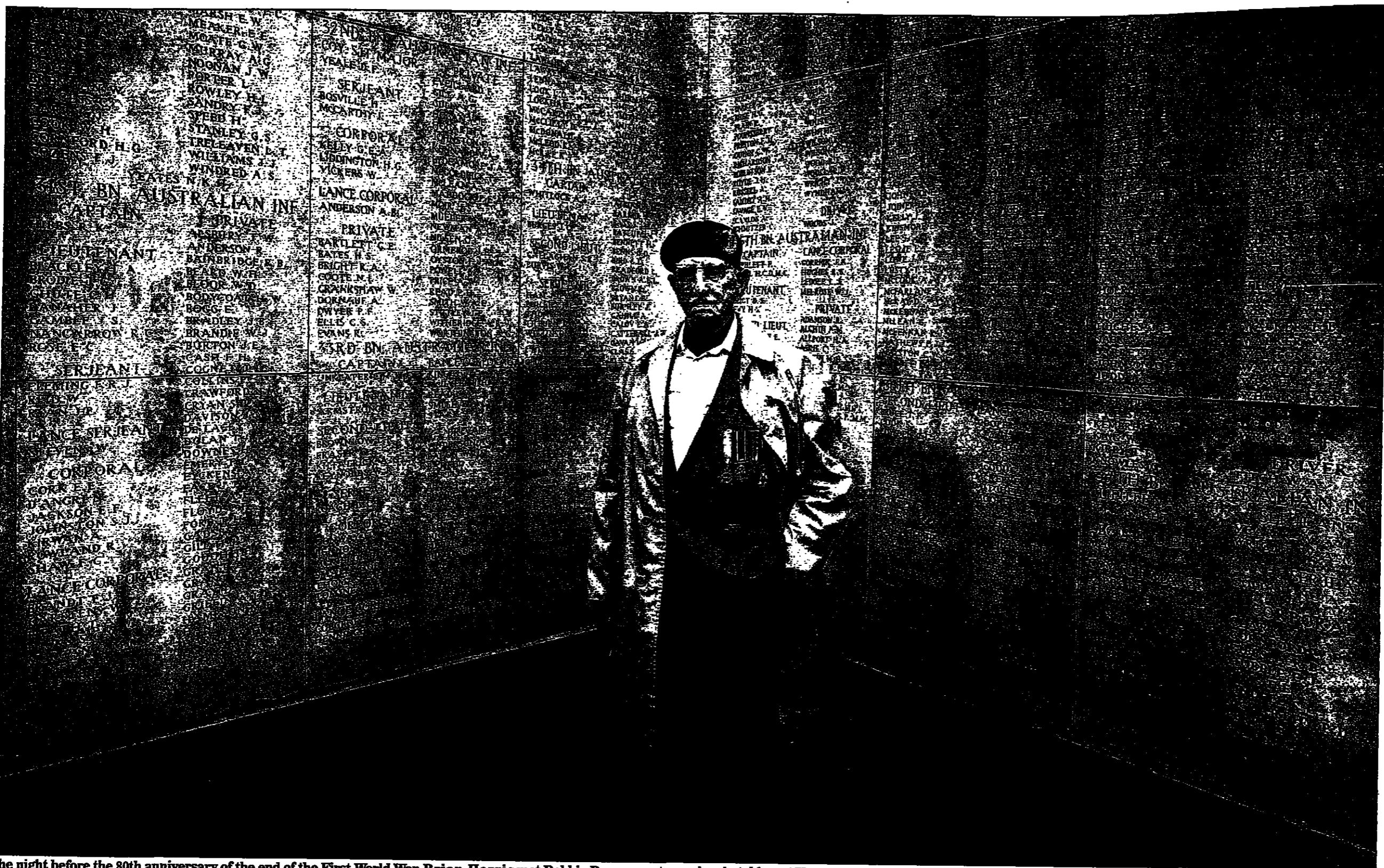
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The night before the 80th anniversary of the end of the First World War, Brian Harris met Robbie Burns, a veteran, in a hotel bar at Ypres. He was just two days from his 104th birthday but the former member of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders agreed to be photographed at the Menin Gate memorial. 'I didn't want to make a compromise picture that had no dignity,' said Harris. 'In Mr Burns, I found someone who encapsulated everything'

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SPORT

Return to France 98: Both the hosts and the Caribbean outsiders have benefited from the World Cup effect

The boom that followed the glory

THE OPTIMISTS said the French victory in the World Cup would change everything, the pessimists said it would change nothing. Politically the jury may still be out. (On the whole, the verdict is likely to be positive.)

In sporting terms, there is no argument. France has gone football mad. Six months after "les hommes d'Alme Jacquet" defeated Brazil 3-0 at St Denis, France is running out of room in its stadia to fit would-be fans; it is running out of football pitches to accommodate would-be players. The average crowd in the French First Division this year, up to the winter pause, was 16,959.

In the same period last year, it was 15,780. This is an increase of more than 20 per cent. Crowds in the Second Division – previously a contradiction in terms – are also up by one fifth, averaging just under 6,000. Even more encouragingly for the future of football in France, junior leagues and clubs have been besieged by youngsters, and some not so young, wanting to play the game played by Zinedine Zidane.

The new recruits are pouring in so rapidly that the Fédération Française de Football has not officially counted them all yet. But the best guess is that another 240,000 French people have joined football clubs since the World Cup – an increase of about 12 per cent.

Many thousands of these recruits come from the troubled suburbs of the larger French cities. In the Ile-de-France, the greater Paris region, new players are joining at a rate of 250 a day. Hamar, a 33-year-old youth worker and voluntary football coach in the eastern suburbs of Paris, said: "As far as the kids around here remember it, France did not win the World Cup. Zinedine Zidane won the World Cup. To see a man who comes from the same background as them – it is not even just a question of race – leading the French team to victory opened these kids' eyes. Everyone wants to be a footballer now."

This is even true in the southwest of the home of Didier Deschamps, Bixente Lizarazu, Christophe Dugarry and Fabien Barthez but also traditionally the home of both codes of rugby. The French rugby federation admits that it has been steadily losing young players to football since the World Cup – especially in its southwestern fiefdom. France, compared to Britain, is already well endowed with municipal football pitches, even in the most remote rural areas. But abruptly there is a shortage of spaces to play on. In Brittany, and

BY JOHN LICHFIELD
in Paris

in parts of the Paris region, teams are stacking up on Saturday and Sunday afternoons to occupy the same piece of grass in the Rhône-Alpes region, handball pitches have been commandeered for five-a-side football games. There is talk of launching a public campaign – "operation 1,000 terrains" – to build 1,000 new football fields.

There is an equivalent problem at the top of the football pyramid. Apart from the grounds rebuilt for the World Cup, French stadia are relatively small. With the boom in interest, many clubs are operating at or near to capacity. The World Cup victory accelerated, rather than reversed, a trend. Crowds had already been growing steadily in recent years.

This season all clubs have benefited from the Zidane-Jacquet effect – save one. Paris St-Germain, the wealthiest club in French football, packed with highly paid but perennially under-achieving stars, is finally losing their long-suffering fans. Financially, French professional football – although continuing to groan about the unfair tax burdens it faces – is in healthy condition. Six years ago the professional clubs made a combined loss of £120m per year; they expect, the half-time results, to make a modest profit of around £5m this year.

On the field, the French best are competing with Europe's best on more or less equal terms. Three French clubs – Marseilles, Bordeaux and Lyons, also leading the championship in that order – made it through to the last eight of the UEFA Cup for the first time. (Lens gallantly failed to qualify for the final stages of the Champions' League; PSG abjectly crashed out of the Cup-Winners' Cup). But an ambitious new breed of football club presidents, led by Gervais Martel of Lens, believes that the French clubs must now use the springboard of France 98 to catch up permanently with the Premiership and Serie A.

Martel is campaigning for a much better tax regime for professional clubs, and their players. He also wants French TV channels to pay a much greater fee for televising matches when the present deals run out in two years' time. The aim, he says, should be to ensure that Zinedine Zidane – and the future Zidanes now squeezing on to pitches all over France – should win international trophies with French clubs as well as the French team.



In the shadow of the Arc de Triomphe, football fans start the Paris party after the French team won the World Cup on home soil in July

Reuters

Rise of the 'Reggae Boyz' inspires island harmony

BY SALLY JONES

"EVER SINCE we qualify for the World Cup, football has taken the front of everything," murmured Walter "Pearl" Boyd, the erstwhile bad boy of Jamaican football, with a grin. "Now it's nothing but kids everywhere juggling a ball every minute of every day. Even the school books are full of football – that's the main thing to make them learn."

Almost a year on from the ecstatic moment when Jamaica's team, mainly composed of talented part-timers, qualified for the World Cup finals for the first time in the island's history, football is bigger than ever. It provides a hefty morale boost, a vital element of unity in this notoriously volatile and fractious society and a trip to Jamaica's flagging economy, hard hit by the decline of the Far East.

Despite Boyd's well-publicised rows with Rene Simoes, Jamaica's technical director, over his cavalier attitude to time-keeping and training sessions, the Reggae Boyz' World Cup run has made his name and his fortune, although he also acknowledges laconically that it has brought "girl trouble, man".

With the whole island in ferment, Simoes threw him out of the squad for indiscipline in the run-up to the event and even the Prime Minister, PJ Patterson, begged for his reinstatement. Boyd bought an airline ticket and flew, weeping, to New York to implore the Brazilian to give him back his place.

"My mother said I couldn't sleep in the house until I apologise to Rene and get back in the team," the 26-year-old confessed sheepishly in the darkness of the cluttered parlour of his family's tiny breeze-block bungalow in the working-class Kingston suburb of Nanny Town. His persistence paid off and, although not in the starting line-up for the group matches in France, he came on as a substitute in all three games. Back home, Boyd, is delighted at

violence-free elections in living memory.

"The Reggae Boyz caught everyone's imagination," Simoes recalled. "They were the Cinderella team, mainly amateurs – bellboys, truck-drivers, who became the first country to qualify without money or modern facilities."

"When I arrived in 1994 I refused to accept the widespread idea that Jamaicans were late, lazy and wouldn't work, and they proved that if you had a dream, trained hard and played as a team, you could topple sides with

just donated a set of football strips to the newly formed team of a community school on a patch of waste ground in Trench Town.

The children, most with literacy problems and from chaotic, dirt-poor backgrounds, talked of the thrill they felt at their own links with the national side. "We are so proud of the Reggae Boyz," stammered 14-year-old Michael Reed, the team captain. "Professor Simoes brought us pictures of the team and gear, which uplift our spirits."

At senior level more companies are offering sponsorship to align themselves with the national side's success and under a new Adopt-a-Player scheme, major firms such as Texaco and Rent-a-Car are helping to fund the national squad's salaries. Playing standards are rising with only certified coaches allowed to train sides in the top two leagues. Until now these have been amateur but plans are afoot for a professional league of the leading 10 sides within two years.

The island's economy has also benefited despite the recession. The national carrier, Air Jamaica, flew in seven per cent more visitors this year than over the same period in 1997, while Sandals, the all-inclusive hotel chain, has seen the numbers of holiday makers go up by more than three per cent.

Oliver Foot, of Air Jamaica and the son of the island's last British governor, attributes this in part to the boost the World Cup gave to morale. "The Reggae Boyz' impact has been tremendous," he said. "It has helped unify Jamaican society and altered its old violent image."

Simoes is realistic about the challenges ahead but elated by the progress so far: "What we need now are imaginative policies, better education, more jobs," he said, "but the hope and self-belief and discipline are starting to show. The Reggae Boyz are the best ambassadors Jamaica could have."



Allsport

security reasons on the Jamaican Defence Force field, was abandoned after a near riot and a shooting in the crowd.

Earlier this month the two met again in a showcase "peace game" played with the utmost good humour, rival supporters walking together for the first time in 25 years through once-violent favela-ridden sections of ghettos such as Trench Town. There was scarcely a scuffle, in the latest example of the new-found unity and sense of national pride that was staying in touch with the ghettos where several players had their first football. He has

Gamblers and Christians united in name of sport

Start of Play: The Curious Origins of our Favourite Sports
By Jonathan Rice
Prion, £14.99, hardback

IN 1907, eight years after his finest hour, Vere Thomas St Ledger Gould was apprehended with his wife at Nice railway station in possession of two trunks which were found to contain the remains of a Danish widow suspected by Mrs Gould of having an affair with her husband. He remains the only Wimbledon finalist to end his life on Devil's Island.

It is exotic episodes like this that make *Start of Play* such an absorbing read. Rice sifts through the early tracings – Julius Caesar kicking a skull across the River Brent, Indians playing polo with human heads wrapped in muslin, the charge against Mary Queen of Scots that immediately her second husband breathed his last, she repaid sharpish to the golf course – then devotes a chapter to each of the major ball games. There is not much in the way of Americana, but then as the word "our" in the subtitle suggests, this is a record of Britain's unique historical contribution to world sports.

The island's economy has also

BOOK OF THE WEEK

It is difficult to pin down absolute beginnings – versions of football and golf were played everywhere, for example. So the book concentrates on the last couple of hundred years, and particularly those intensely productive few decades of the last century when sports were organised and codified, the forces of privilege planting their flags and making sure the peasants were kept out of the loop.

As usual when sport is involved, the story is sometimes venal, sometimes glorious (but mostly venal). Gambling was often the spur for development – even the original *raison d'être* of professional cricket, whose ranks swelled from 20-strong in 1840 to 500-plus in 1860, was to please the punters (tennis, the modern version of which was born in the back gardens of the bourgeoisie, was an exception).

Later, the proponents of an empire based on muscular Christianity took over, asserting their moral superiority over the money-grubbers. All the Victorian sporting

pioneers, Rice notes, were of the ruling classes, though for him they were unwitting revolutionaries as well, setting in motion "huge forces for social change".

With respect to Rice, the academic bit should be left to the academics – he is on his shakiest ground when attempting grand conclusions, painting with a broad brush. His skill is as a miniaturist, refuting out the colourful details.

There is a succession of fascinating firsts and fabulous facts, for example – the first international (Scotland v England at golf 1681), the first cricket tour to be cancelled for political reasons (1789 – guess why), John Wisden's 10 clean-bowled wickets in an innings. And every chapter is embellished with deft characterisation and a lightness of touch that makes for easy reading.

Rice had a good idea and has executed it well. Major Walter Clopton Wingfield had one good idea – sphairistike, the precursor of modern tennis. But, as Rice says, he "moved on to other things: one of his later books was entitled *Bicycle Gymkhana*."

One wishes Rice better luck with his future projects.

CHRIS MAUME

THIS WEEK'S TOP TEN SPORTS BOOKS

- 1 Angry White Pyjamas, Robert Twigger (Indigo, paperback, £6.99).
- 2 Addicted, Tony Adams with Ian Ridley (Collins Willow, hardback, £16.99).
- 3 Bleak and Blue – 22 Years at the Manchester Academy of Football Farce, Craig Winstanley (Sigma, paperback, £8.95).
- 4 European Football Yearbook 1998-99, edited by Mike Hammond (Sports Projects, paperback, £23.95).
- 5 Winter Colours – Changing Seasons in World Rugby, Donald McRae (Mainstream, hardback, £16.99).
- 6 Elliott's Golf Form 1999, Keith Elliott (Portway Press, paperback, £20.00).
- 7 Turning Point, Sean Fitzpatrick and Duncan Johnstone (Penguin, hardback, £16.99).
- 8 Jenny Pitman – The Autobiography (Partridge, hardback, £16.99).
- 9 Playing at Home, John Aizlewood (Hampshire Press, hardback, £16.95).
- 10 Annuario del Calcio Mondiale 98-99, Salvatore Lo Presti (SET, hardback, £19.95).

List compiled by Sportspages, 94-95 Charing Cross Road, London (0171) 240 9604 and St Ann's Square, Manchester (0161) 832 8530, and www.sportspages.co.uk

KEMPTON

HYPERION

12.40 Fanfarion 2.20 Dato Star
1.15 Amaroso (nb) 2.55 Lancastrian Jet
1.45 Simons Castle 3.25 Even Flow

GOING: Soft
■ Right-hand course Practically flat. Run-in of 200yd.
■ Course is on Richmond & Hatton Cross Underground stations. Kempton Park railway station adjoins course. ADMISSION: Club £6 (Juniors 7-17 years £3), Tattersalls £2, Silver Ring £5. Accompanied under-16s free. CAR PARK: Members £2, remainder free.
FIVE-YEAR STATISTICS
1993: 18 won from 67 runners (28%), R Almer 15-43
1994: 11 won from 67 runners (16%), R Almer 15-43
1995: 22 won from 73 runners (30%), M A Fitzgerald 21-15 (83%)
1996: 25 won from 78 runners (32%), R Dunwoody 19-55 (70%)
FAVOURITES: 122-299 (42%)
BLUNKERED FIRST TIME: None

12.40 PERTEMPS WAYWARD LAD NOVICE CHASE (CLASS B) £15,000 added 2m 4f 110yds Penalty Value £12,500
1. 321-1 FANFARION (Fr) (9) (Elite Racing) C Epsom 7/7 ... R Johnson
2. 722-3 HOM EXPRESS (9) (Mrs J L Eggin) P Webber 6/7 ... A Thornton
3. 2-222-4 2-declared -

BETTING: 4-11 Fanfarion, 2-1 Hoh Express
1997: Anglos Double 9/1 3/5 (R Boucher) 4/4

FORM VERDICT

There were 151 run in opposing FANFARION, who was so exciting on his debut at Market Rasen last month. There are worries about the ground and he should take care of Hoh Express, although Paul Webber's novice is capable of winning some fair races himself.

1.15 PERTEMPS NETWORK NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS C) £7,000 added 2m 3f 200yds Penalty Value £5,084
1. 3P-71 TRAILIDE (Fr) (9) (T S M Cunningham) M Pipe 11/7 ... G Supply (3)
2. 2-222-3 DANCING DERRISH (9) (Felicity Bowes Partnership) S Major 11/0 ... C Webb
3. 1-151 JAMORIN DANCER (Fr) (M Barke) 11/0 ... M Richards
4. 5-223-2 NEW BIRD (Fr) (P Corrigan) D Houghton 11/0 ... R Colley
5. 6-223-3 RED BORDEAUX (Fr) (P J Spence) A Hefford 11/0 ... C Lewellen
7. 2-222-4 SUPER-GEM (Fr) (P J Barrois) J Warrington 11/0 ... A Thornton
8. 6-223-5 TEMPERA (USA) (16) (P M Rooney) R Ingram 11/0 ... J Aspell
9. 4-223-6 AMOROSO (17) (Barcos Boys) N Henderson 10/9 ... J R Kenmough
- 9-declared -

BETTING: 9-4 New Bird, 2-2 Trailide, 3-1 Amoroso, 10-1 Red Bordeaux, 12-1 Tempera, 20-1 Jamorin, 25-1 Dancer, Mystery Guest, 25-1 others
1997: Upgrade 3/1 0/0 Lewellen 25-1 (N Tanton-Davies) 13 ran

FORM GUIDE

Trailide: Winner in France before debut at Fontwell. Improved form when last flat, drawn out, beat Stinger 14 lengths at Newbury (2m hole, good). Further progress likely, but latest form has not worked out particularly well.

Dancing Derrish: Low-grade mile winning handicap on the Flat for Ian Baldwin. Cost new connections 2000gms. Yard newcomers usually better for experience.

Jamorin Dancer: Lingfield 11f winner in June for Michael Jarvis. Goes well on soft ground, but not run in over 1m 6f and not running in the market.

Red Bordeaux: Maiden 1m 6f for Mark Prescott. Making dashes debut for Hemmings' nights. Act on soft.

New Bird: Mile winner in Germany. Promising handle debut when, looked dangerous 2 out, 16 lengths to Tom Paddington at Cheltenham (2m hole, good to soft).

Looks capable of better and should be suited by easier track.

Red Bordeaux: Calmly 1m maiden winner in Oct for Barry Hills. Handles debut for new connections 2000gms. Drawn out and last round in the betting. Act on easy surface.

Super-Gem: Gentle 1m 6f to 1m 7f for Mark Prescott. Cost new connections 2000gms and promising debut when, weakened 2 out, 36 lengths 6f to 8 Hors. La Loi 11f at Lingfield (2m hole, soft). Should improve but probably needs steeper ground.

Tempera: Sister to Teo Trophy winner Sharapova. 9f winner on Flat and useful hurdles debut when, tenderly-handled 28 lengths 4f to 8 Tom Paddington at Cheltenham (2m hole, good to soft). Interesting prospect with yard in great form.

VERDICT: This fairly sharp track could find out Trailide, who has looked a hard ride, so the answer could be NEW BIRD, who ran up against above-average types in Tom Paddington and Hit And Run at Cheltenham and should have learned from the experience. With Nicky Henderson's team in flying form, it would be better to see Amoroso, who was stopped in her tracks by a mistake at Cheltenham, playing a much bigger role.

1.45 PERTEMPS EDUCATION NETWORK HANDICAP (CLASS C) £441
1. 22-26 TEENIE (Fr) (9) (Mr Simon Sanderson) H Daly 7/2 ... R Johnson
2. 23-26 SIMONS CASTLE (23) (M Barke) R O'Sullivan 5/1 ... C Lewellen
3. 0-22 WORLD EXPRESS (11) (D) (Drogan) P Webber 6/10 ... R Colley
4. 24-26 RED RAJA (Fr) (P J Barrois) M 10/12 ... C Lewellen
5. 0-24 PEALINGS (9) (D) (G Hulbert) C Hubbard 6/6 ... A Thornton
6. 0-24 ALIZÉ WILNS (26) (D) (Mrs H Kenmough) H 10/10 ... J R Kenmough
- 7-declared -

Minimum weight: 102. True handicap weight: 102. Wins 8s 11s

BETTING: 9-4 World Express, 3-1 King Measure, 7-2 Pealings, 5-1 Simons Castle, 8-1 Red Raja, 12-1 Alizé Wilns, 14-1 Tenies

1997: Three Farthings 7/10 3 C Lewellen 6/4 9/1 Old 7 ran

FIRST SHOW

Chepstow 2.15

C H L S T
Dane Stoucas 9/4 41 7/2 7/2 7/3
Earth Sun 9/4 41 7/2 7/2 7/3
Macpree 9/2 5/2 5/1 5/1 5/2
Eprise 7/1 6/1 6/1 7/4 8/1
Holding T Fuchs 7/1 6/2 6/4 8/1 8/2
Tordell Express 6/1 6/1 6/1 8/1 8/1
Forest Ivory 6/1 6/1 6/1 6/1 6/1
Sat By T Stow 16/1 16/1 16/1 16/1 16/1
Kendal Cavalier 12/1 16/1 16/1 16/1 16/1
Sands 16/1 16/1 16/1 16/1 16/1
Him Or Palace 20/1 16/1 12/1 11/1 12/1
After Mole 33/4 33/4 33/4 33/4 33/4
Theough 160/1 190/1 66/1 100/1 100/1
Cholby 160/1 190/1 100/1 100/1 100/1
Each-way, a quarter the odds, places 1, 2, 3
C Cost: H William Hill L Ladbrokes S Stanley T Bet

Kempton 2.20

C H L S T
Dane Star 11-1 6/1 6/1 5/6 4/5
French Holly 8/2 5/2 5/1 11/4 9/4
Kared 5/1 4/1 6/1 6/2 6/1
Master Bavelied 7/2 9/1 10/1 8/1 8/1
Walled 2/2 2/1 2/1 2/1 2/1

Each-way, a quarter the odds, places 1, 2, 3
C Cost: H William Hill L Ladbrokes S Stanley T Bet

Leopardstown 2.40

C H L T
Florida Pearl 5/4 6/3 11/10 11/10
Sunny Bay 6/4 6/4 13/8 13/4
Doris Doyle 4/1 9/2 5/1 4/1
Bose Doyle 8/1 8/1 9/1 9/1
Buck Rogers 35/1 35/1 5/1 40/1
Many People 100/1 100/1 100/1 100/1
Each-way, a quarter the odds, places 1, 2, 3
C Cost: H William Hill L Ladbrokes T Bet

ANTE-POST

Cheltenham Gold Cup

H
1. 22-25: HEN DE PER (Mr R Forman) 11-4
2. 2-222-4: FEVER NOBLE (10-3; C. St. Leger) 11-4
3. 2-222-5: SIMON'S CASTLE (9) (M Barke) 11-4
4. 2-222-6: DANE STAR (11) (P. Corrigan) 11-4
5. 2-222-7: RED BORDEAUX (Fr) (P. Corrigan) 11-4
6. 2-222-8: HOM EXPRESS (9) (Mrs H Kenmough) 11-4
7. 2-222-9: TORDELL EXPRESS (10) (P. Corrigan) 11-4
8. 2-222-10: FRENCH HOLLY (10) (P. Corrigan) 11-4
9. 2-222-11: ALIZÉ WILNS (26) (D) (Mrs H Kenmough) 11-4
10. 2-222-12: KARTEL (11) (P. Corrigan) 11-4
11. 2-222-13: DANE STOUCAS (11) (P. Corrigan) 11-4
12. 2-222-14: SIMON'S CASTLE (23) (M Barke) 11-4
13. 2-222-15: HOM EXPRESS (9) (Mrs H Kenmough) 11-4
14. 2-222-16: TORDELL EXPRESS (10) (P. Corrigan) 11-4
15. 2-222-17: RED BORDEAUX (Fr) (P. Corrigan) 11-4
16. 2-222-18: FRENCH HOLLY (10) (P. Corrigan) 11-4
17. 2-222-19: ALIZÉ WILNS (26) (D) (Mrs H Kenmough) 11-4
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108. 2-222-110: TORDELL EXPRESS (10) (P. Corrigan) 11-4
109. 2

Gloves off as Stewart strikes back

TO KEEP or not to keep has been a perennial question asked of Alec Stewart. On a cold windy day more reminiscent of Manchester in April than Melbourne in summer, the answer was emphatically delivered. Dispensing with wicket-keeping gloves and returning to open the innings, Stewart scored his first Test century against Australia. He now has a Test hundred against every Test playing nation save India.

If it was not overly cheery news for England - they still managed to lose their last seven wickets for 70 runs - it was good news for wicket-keepers. For now, the vacancy is being filled by Warren Hegg, a decision Stewart claimed was made 40 minutes before the scheduled start on Boxing Day morning, after Alex Tudor pulled up lame with a sore hip.

"Playing Alex was an attempt to be positive," Stewart said. "When he wasn't fit, I wanted to do something that appeared to be attacking, so I moved up to opening and gave Hegg the gloves. If Tudor had played, I'd definitely have kept wicket."

Stewart, however, has never made any secrets about preferring to open the innings. "I've kept wicket in order to give us options whether it be five bowlers, or, as has tended to happen here, seven batsmen. Obviously I'm not saying I'll never keep wicket again, or that I won't open again. Just that I'll always try and do what the selectors feel is best for the side. Obviously, if we'd have done well, I'd have kept all series."

But England have done far from well, especially in the Tests completed, and taking on

CRICKET in Melbourne

England 270
Australia 59-2

three jobs (keeping, batting and captaining) against a side as combative as Australia, was always going to require one glowing CV too many.

If the theory looked sustainable, the practical has proved otherwise, and against these opponents, this, as the following figures prove, was a compromise too many.

As a keeper/batsman in Tests, Stewart has batted 76 times, scored 2,310 runs, with three centuries at an average of 33.47. When unencumbered with the gloves, that increases to 1,564 runs from 77 innings at an average of 48.78, including nine hundreds.

Mind you, Stewart's shedding of the gloves is not the only strategic pillar likely to be abandoned. Apparently David Lloyd, the coach, has intimated that he will resign after the World Cup, three months before his contract is up.

Lloyd has been under pressure this tour, but he is no more culpable than anyone else involved in management, and probably a great deal less than most of the players, who come to him the products of a flawed system. In fact, aside from the occasional ill-timed outburst, he has made sure his players have received every available tool to improve their game. With him as coach, England have not wanted for energy and ideas and he should not allow himself to be pushed.

Having begun streakily, his first two opening shots were boundaries off edges that might easily have gone to hand, Stewart continued to score at a cracking rate. On four when joined at the crease by Nasser Hussain, Stewart dominated the 77-run partnership to such an extent that the Essex batsman had made just 19 when he pushed carelessly at a wide one from Matthew Nicholson, a mistake that gave the debutant fast bowler a fortuitous Test scalp.

Nicholson, who took seven wickets against England for Western Australia at the start of the tour, did not find the strong winds to his liking. Apart from the wicket, his 10 overs went at nearly six runs an over; a major haemorrhage induced mainly by Stewart, who played a series of cuts and pull shots.

Joined by Mark Ramprakash, who virtually matched his partner's telling strokeplay, England began to take control. Bringing up his hundred with an all-run four of Stuart MacGill, Stewart became the first England captain since Mike Denness in 1975 to pass three figures at the MCG.

Soon after Ramprakash reached his fifty from 69 balls, a milestone that also saw the 200 up in 51.4 overs, a run-rate rarely achieved against a side

Tested. After 110, he added 14 to 160, 17 to 176, 18 to 184, 19 to 190, 20 to 206, 21 to 212, 22 to 228, 23 to 234, 24 to 240, 25 to 256, 26 to 262, 27 to 278, 28 to 284, 29 to 290, 30 to 306, 31 to 312, 32 to 328, 33 to 334, 34 to 340, 35 to 350, 36 to 360, 37 to 370, 38 to 380, 39 to 390, 40 to 400, 41 to 410, 42 to 420, 43 to 430, 44 to 440, 45 to 450, 46 to 460, 47 to 470, 48 to 480, 49 to 490, 50 to 500, 51 to 510, 52 to 520, 53 to 530, 54 to 540, 55 to 550, 56 to 560, 57 to 570, 58 to 580, 59 to 590, 60 to 600, 61 to 610, 62 to 620, 63 to 630, 64 to 640, 65 to 650, 66 to 660, 67 to 670, 68 to 680, 69 to 690, 70 to 700, 71 to 710, 72 to 720, 73 to 730, 74 to 740, 75 to 750, 76 to 760, 77 to 770, 78 to 780, 79 to 790, 80 to 800, 81 to 810, 82 to 820, 83 to 830, 84 to 840, 85 to 850, 86 to 860, 87 to 870, 88 to 880, 89 to 890, 90 to 900, 91 to 910, 92 to 920, 93 to 930, 94 to 940, 95 to 950, 96 to 960, 97 to 970, 98 to 980, 99 to 990, 100 to 1000, 101 to 1010, 102 to 1020, 103 to 1030, 104 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Rudderless Stevenage in search of new guide

A YEAR ago this week, Stevenage Borough were preparing for an FA Cup third-round tie against Swindon that would thrust them into the national spotlight thanks to the fourth-round draw pairing them with Kenny Dalglish's Newcastle.

As 1999 approaches, however, the mood at the Conference club is somewhat different. Without a manager following the sacking of last year's hero, Paul Fairclough, Borough are clinging to the tails of the leading clubs despite a chronic inability to

score goals – they have only 26 in 21 games so far – and various storms raging behind the scenes.

The efforts of caretaker manager Noel Blackwell to bring in players – reportedly being hampered by Fairclough's refusal to speak to him – have been dealt a blow by the resignation of the former Tottenham men Gary Mabbutt, Graham Roberts and Chris Waddle.

In the circumstances, Saturday's goalless draw at home to Rushden and Diamonds was a creditable result, keeping Borough in fourth place in the table, 12 points behind the leaders Kettering but with three games in hand.

And now the youth coach Malcolm Allen, the former Wales and Newcastle striker, has threatened to quit, unless he gets the manager's job.

Stafford make most stunning comeback

IF THERE has been a better comeback this season than the one Stafford Rangers pulled off against Birston in the Dr Martens League on Saturday, this column would like to hear about it.

Midland Division Rangers made a nightmare start, going 3-0 down in the first 15 minutes, conceding a bizarre own goal after their keeper slipped on the muddy pitch and fell over.

After Rangers had missed a penalty of their own, that remained the score at half-time and even when Stafford pulled a goal back four minutes into the second period, Birston still appeared well in control.

Indeed, when Stafford grabbed another through Love with 15 minutes left, it seemed

a mere consolation. However Rangers not only equalised with seven minutes to go but took the lead 60 seconds later; Ecclesford firing in after Barlow had forced the ball over the line moments earlier.

And it was not over even with that flurry of scoring. In the last four minutes, Mitchell and Ecclesford added two more goals to turn the 3-0 deficit into a 6-3 win.

Having recovered from 3-0 and 4-3 down to defeat Dover 5-4 in the Conference the week before, Doncaster Rovers must have believed their comeback could not be topped. But Rovers were level with 14 minutes to go, whereas Rangers still trailed with just seven remaining.

KEY NUMBERS

7 The club-record run of consecutive clean sheets Sunderland failed to equal at Tranmere. The corresponding fixture last season deprived them of a record-equalling 18-match unbeaten streak.

400 The number of career appearances clocked up by Aston Villa wing-back Alan Wright with Saturday's appearance against his former club Blackburn.

I TOLD YOU SO

"We'll give it our best shot and hopefully we can finally win a match."

Nottingham Forest's captain Steve Chettle, before their 3-0 loss at Old Trafford made 16 games without a win for his side.

THAT WAS THE WEEKEND THAT WAS

EDITED BY JON CULLEY

PREMIERSHIP TEAM OF THE WEEK

KEITH GILLESPIE
Blackburn Rovers

JONATHAN WOODGATE
Leeds United

MICHAEL OAKES
Aston Villa

GIANFRANCO ZOLA
Chelsea

JOHN ALOISI
Coventry City

JASON EUELL
Wimbledon

HORATIO CARBONARI
Derby County

GUSTAVO POVET
Chelsea

KEVIN GALLACHER
Blackburn Rovers

LEE BOWYER
Leeds United

STEVE BOULD
Arsenal

Manager of the weekend: David O'Leary – not only organised the sifting of Alan Shearer and Duncan Ferguson but gave Eddie's licence to attack, too. Performance of the weekend: Liverpool – the first visitors to win at Middlesbrough's Riverside Stadium for 14 months.

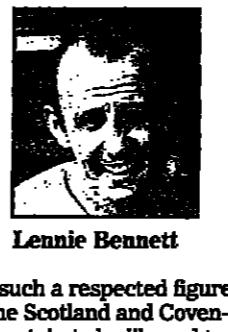
Missing... making it... and mistaken



JOHN OSTER
EVERTON



JAMES BEATTIE
SOUTHAMPTON



Lennie Bennett
ASTON VILLA

The 20-year-old midfielder, a £1.5m signing from Grimsby in July 1997, made more first-team starts than any Everton player with 35 appearances last season, yet has been restricted to four this year, and only two of those in the Premiership. He clearly does not have a place in Walter Smith's plans and can expect to be shipped out as the Goodison wage bill in cut.

Some doubted Dave Jones' wisdom in paying £1m for a 20-year-old with a handful of senior games but after moving from Blackburn in the summer the young striker has rapidly settled in at The Dell and has impressed the Southampton manager enough to now command a regular first-team spot.

For such a respected figure as the Scotland and Coventry captain to be likened to an English comedian might be considered the worst insult of all. Unfortunately for Gary, however, there is an unmistakable similarity...

GARY McALLISTER
LIVERPOOL

Postponed: Farnborough v Hayes; Forster v Yeovil.

Kidd's crusade on course

BY DERICK ALLSOP

Blackburn Rovers 2
Aston Villa 1

JOHN GREGORY pleaded an obvious miscarriage of justice with suitable vehemence, calling for the use of television evidence to assist rather than condemn match officials.

The cameras in this case confirmed Aston Villa's goalkeeper Michael Oakes, released the ball before he strayed outside his penalty area and that he was wrongly dismissed by the referee, Dermot Gallagher, who felt he was left with no other course of action after a linesman indicated the offence.

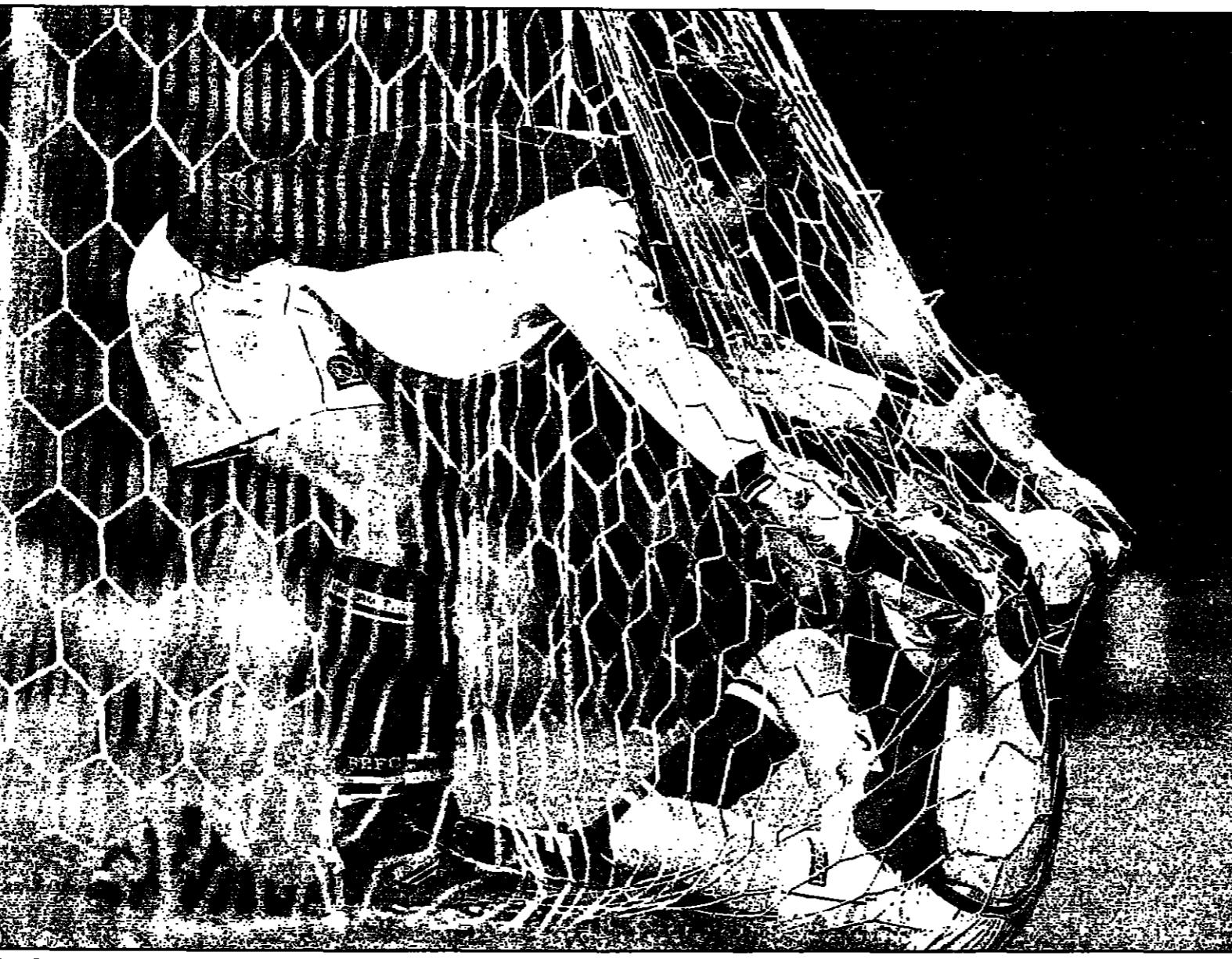
It is an unmitigated predicament for Gallagher as his endeavours to satisfy the authorities he is up to the job, following his suspension last season for being too lenient with Arsenal's Steve Bould. He must surely rescind this expulsion and spare Oakes a suspension.

As Gregory ruefully acknowledged, the points cannot be reclaimed. He concluded the 54th-minute incident cost his team the match. This contention, however, does not necessarily stand up to closer scrutiny. The facts are that Villa were trailing 1-0 when Oakes departed and would have been much further adrift but for the outstanding efforts of their keeper. Only at that juncture and, fired by the challenge of defying the odds, did they exert the kind of pressure required of aspiring champions.

An equaliser, from the unlikely source of Riccardo Scimeca, rewarded their passionate retaliation, only for Tim Sherwood to inflict a final, fatal wound and compound Gregory's outrage.

The greater damage was sustained in the first half, when Blackburn were much the more purposeful and incisive. Keith Gillespie, making his home debut, and Jason Wilcox provided venom from the flanks. Sherwood and Billy McKinlay persistent support from the heart of the midfield.

Chris Sutton's very presence up-front has a galvanising effect on the team and intimidates the opposition, while at the back Stéphane Henchoz's commanding influence is equally significant.



Tangled up in blue and white: Chris Sutton (left) and Kevin Gallacher celebrate Blackburn's first goal against Aston Villa

Happiness is a clean sheet for Ferguson

BY GUY HODGSON

Manchester United 3
Nottingham Forest 0

second goal took so long to come. The source was eyebrow-raising too, given the way United's centre-backs have been working together recently, but when Henning Berg won a header in the Forest area Johnsen swivelled before volleying immaculately.

At that point, as Bassett put it, "the party was on" and United's third goal was glorious. Teddy Sheringham passed inside to Beckham, whose first-time touch was such a plumped and sumptuous cushion it would have won the admiration of a master upholsterer. Giggs could luxuriate in it, delicately chipping the advancing Beasant.

Which puts need in perspective. Ferguson's sights are on a fifth Premiership title in seven seasons, not to mention the European Cup, and the chaotic defending of recent weeks had put the first ambition in jeopardy and hardly inspired belief in the second. The "in" in the visiting column was appreciated as much as the "three" in the home.

It was 8 November, before Peter Schmeichel's announcement that he is to leave United, since they last achieved that. "They are not bad defenders," Ferguson said, "they have been careless at times, but they defended sensibly today. If we get a few more clean sheets, confidence will come back."

For 25 minutes it was not only the home defence who looked bereft. Ryan Giggs could not have found a roast spud in his Christmas dinner. David Beckham looked disorientated and Nicky Butt was expending loads of energy to little effect. A full-strength Forest could have taken them, a team weakened by injury and suspension could only hope for a lucky punch.

And yet it is matches such as this that have us crying out for more.

Goal: Gallacher (1-0); Scimeca (1-1); Sherwood (2-1); Oakes (3-1); Filan; Kenny; Gillaspie; Wilcox; Bould; Johnsen; Berg; Sutton (Davies, 65); Gallacher (Duff, 73). **Substitutes not used:** Johnson, Ferri (gk).

Blackburn: Villa (3-5-2); Oakes; Ehogu, Southgate; Scimeca; Watson, Hendrie (Rachel, 58); Filan; Taylor (Collymore, 69); Thompson, Wright; Duff; Johnsen; Davies, not used; Charles, Duff; Grayson.

Referee: D. Gallacher (Bury). **Bookings:** Bould; Blackburn; Davidsson, Wilcox, Davies, Johnsen; Scimeca. **Sent off:** Aston Villa: Oakes. **Man of the match:** Johnsen. **Attendance:** 27,536.

Allsport

Arsenal's hit and miss affair

BY PETER CONCHIE

IT WAS exactly what we should have expected at this time of year from the Premiership's most traditional club. Arsenal paid tribute to a faithful servant and indulged themselves to wasteful excess. As is also custom on the day after Christmas they were given the chance to feast on ham - West Ham, that is - but, while Arsenal were presented with the game in a plate, they merely picked at their hapless opponents in a match which should have been won by half a dozen goals.

Arsenal's wonderful first-half display provided a snapshot of Arsène Wenger's vision of the future. The thrust of their attack was driven by the powerful link play of Patrick Vieira and Emmanuel Petit, both of whom Dennis Bergkamp worried away at the West

Arsenal 1
West Ham United 0

Ham defence with a series of diagonal runs towards Shaka Hislop's far post. Marc Overmars, meanwhile, gave Trevor Sinclair a seasonal roasting on the left-hand side in what was a cruel mismatch of attacking prowess and defensive unfamiliarity.

A 1-0 interval lead was soon return indeed after Overmars' right-footed shot beat an inattentive Hislop at the near-post with only seven minutes gone. Bergkamp, Ray Parlour, Lee Dixon and Nicolao Anelka all had chances as Arsenal had 21 attempts on goal in the opening 45 minutes. Arsenal's profligacy was symbolised by the deci-

sion to substitute their substitute, Christopher Wreh, who was replaced by Giles Grimandi in the second half.

The return of Ian Wright to Highbury for the first time since his transfer to West Ham turned out to be a sideshow. Arsenal's record goalscorer looked about to take a lap of honour before kick-off as he applauded the generous volume of chants and cheers from the Highbury crowd.

This, as it turned out, was the highpoint of a miserable afternoon in which his most significant contribution was to nick the ball off the toe of Eyal Berkovic in the last minute to inadvertently prevent a West Ham equaliser.

"Things are not in our hands," Wenger commented afterwards on his team's champ-

ionship aspirations. "We have only won two [consecutive] games. We have to be realistic and our chances are very, very small." Wenger's disingenuousness was perhaps overplayed, but his team will be brittle title contenders without a consistent striker to complement the extraordinary attacking talents of Overmars and Bergkamp, especially as Anelka's ankle injury could keep him out for up to three weeks.

Match over 1-0.

Arsenal: Petit, Vieira, Parlour, Overmars, Anelka (Wreh, 30); Grimandi, 76; Bergkamp, Dennis, Bould, not used; Winter, West Ham United (3-5-2); Hislop; Pearce, Ferdinand, Portas, Kefler (Lazuris, 64), Lomax, Berkovic, Lampard, Sinclair, Hartson, Wright. **Substitutes not used:** Omeruo, Omeruo, Mervin, Fornals (gk). **Referee:** P. Jones (Loughborough). **Bookings:** Arsenal: Vieira. West Ham: Kellie, Lazaris. **Attendance:** 38,098. **Man of the match:** Bould.

Liverpool give Houllier hope

BY SCOTT BARNES

HALFWAY THROUGH the season, the Liverpool manager, Gérard Houllier, believes his charges have finally turned the corner.

"We have a lot of work to do but we are going up," he said, after his side became the first to win at Middlesbrough in 14 months. He singled out his five-man midfield, who threw a shield in front of his three defenders to protect them both from the supply to Middlesbrough's rampaging forwards and from themselves.

For while Paul Gascoigne was pushed backwards into less harmful areas and the tireless runs of Andy Townsend were curtailed, Liverpool's back line looked far from composed. Even given the gale, David James' kicking was poor, Phil Babb looked calamitously

uncomfortable under high balls with Hamilton Ricard and Brian Deane behaving like birds in china shops, and even Steve Staunton passed the simplest of balls straight to a red shirt - of Middlesbrough.

The home side's best moments came from Liverpool's unconventional defending. Their goal came when Deane outjumped Babb and outwitted James; Middlesbrough's closest effort was Babb's stooping header in front of James, who was expecting to gather Townsend's cross, and Ricard's clearest opening came courtesy of a strange back-header from Paul Ince.

Still, Liverpool did calm down after half-time, largely because their revolving forward line began to take the game to the defence that had lost its yin-yang.

Gary Pallister had a fitness test before the game on his ankle and was feeling it after 10 minutes, when maybe he should have come off, "Robson said. Pallister had first lost Ince, who set up Liverpool's first for Carragher; and then, unsettled by Michael Owen, back-passed for Mark Schwarzer to pick up and concede the free-kick that Jamie Redknapp blasted home for his side's second.

With Pallister substituted at half-time, it was Karlheinz Riedle's appearance on the hour in place of Robbie Fowler that sealed the game. Until then, Middlesbrough had a hope that a goalmouth gift

Smiths find no answers blowing in the wind

BY JON CULLEY

THE GALE not withstanding, this was a match veering off course and heading for the rocks. Apart from one defected, wind-assisted shot that almost embarrassed Mart Poom in the Derby goal, Everton did not look remotely like scoring. But then they had failed to do so in six of their nine home matches before this one. Quite how they managed to attract an audience of more than 39,000 is a mystery.

Derby must have regretted not being more adventurous. Then again, there were extenuating circumstances behind Jim Smith's decision to give the wing-back Rory Delap the job of partnering Paulo Wanchope in attack. Francesco Baiano is injured, Dean Burton on loan to Barnsley and Dean Sturridge had announced he was in no state of mind to play a few hours before kick-off.

Asked if he wanted to keep his erstwhile leading scorer, Smith made his feelings plain. "If he feels like that [ready to leave], maybe we will have to do something about it," he said. Even without Sturridge, Derby could - perhaps should - have left Goodison with three points. Twice during their best spell in the first half, better

finishing from Wanchope would have brought a goal. First, the Costa Rican's control let him down when the busy Stefano Ernani sent him clear; then he blazed into the crowd after Thomas Mythe, failing to hold a fierce free-kick from Horatio Carbonari, had obligingly dropped the ball at his feet.

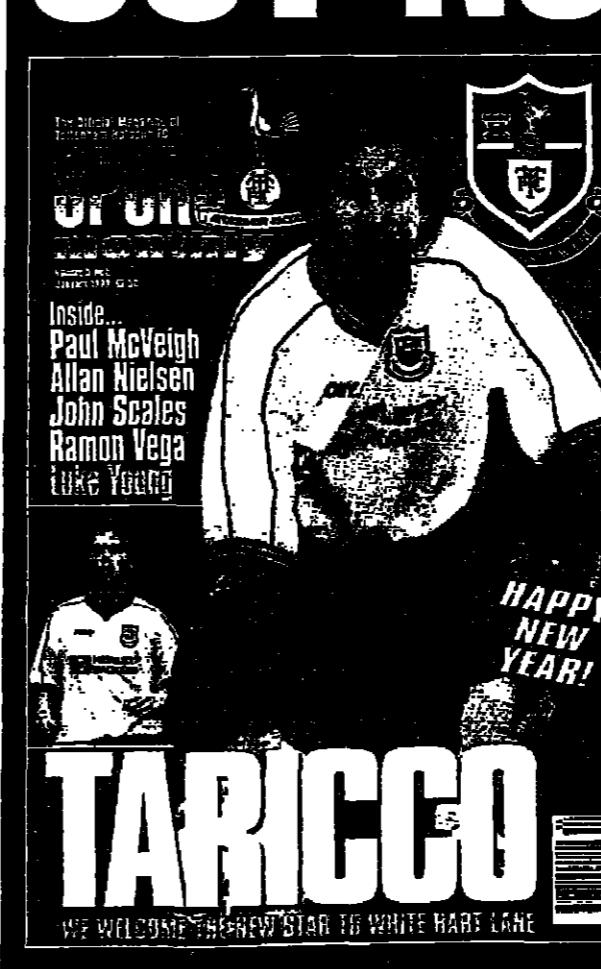
Even so, it was better than anything Everton achieved, which must worry their manager, Walter Smith. With the exception, perhaps, of the injured Joe Parkinson, this was his best available XI, and there is no money for reinforcements.

"We have been goalless in far too many home games this season," he said, stating the obvious. "I'm not sure what the answer is, but I will have to find it within my current squad."

Everton: 1-1. **Derby County:** 0-0.

Referee: S. Lodge (Barnsley). **Bookings:** Everton: Unsworth, Mythe, Materazzi, Derby: Elliott, Carsley, Delap. **Man of the match:** Carbonari. **Attendance:** 39,000.

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Game Results 26/12/98.

This Saturday there were 10 score draws:

COVENTRY	V	TOTTENHAM	LEYTON O.	V	SWANSEA
BLACKPOOL	V	WIGAN	ROCHDALE	V	CARLISLE
WALSALL	V	WYCOMBE	AIRDRIE	V	RAITH
YORK	V	BURNLEY	G'CK MORTON	V	CLYDEBANK
NETHER	V	PLYMOUTH	STENH'MUR	V	E. STIRLING

*Matchmaker Adjudicated Results for postponed matches

Home wins (14): BRISTOL ROVERS, ALLOA, BRECHIN, DUMBARTON.

Away wins (1): ABERBOTH.

No score draws (0): NONE.

Score draws (0): NONE.

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7 Score draws	112	£108.60
6 Score draws	1411	£17
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MONDAY REVIEW

COMMENT • FEATURES • ARTS • LISTINGS • TELEVISION

Praise Be!
It's Thora Hird

Thora Hird is a DBE, an OBE and a DLitt, and I point out to her that there are more letters after her name than there are in it. But Thora didn't get where she is today - London

Television Centre, to be exact, in a sumptuous mink coat - by succumbing to flattery. "Yes I know, luv," she says. "And it's all very nice, but I scrubbed my mother's steps when I was younger, y'know."

Those Lancashire vowels are as raw as ever, even though Thora has lived for nigh on 60 years in a mews off London's Bayswater Road. I have to call her Thora, incidentally. "Hird" or even "Dame Thora" sounds all wrong for a woman like Delia and Cilla, with whom the nation is on first-name terms.

On the day we meet, Thora has been collected in a posh car and delivered to London Television Centre for a screening of *Lost For Words*, Deric Longden's tear-jerking autobiographical drama in which she plays the ailing mum of a writer, played by Pete Postlethwaite. There are some saccharine moments, but *Lost For Words* is a treat all the same, and increasing frailty has not blunted Thora's superb comic timing. "Do you want to be buried, mum, or cremated?" asks Postlethwaite. "Oh I don't know, luv," she says. A tiny pause. It's all in the pause. "Surprise me."

Following the screening, which has reduced her to tears - "fancy crying at yerself pretending" - Thora is wheeled into an adjoining room for our interview. She is at pains to tell me that she is not normally confined to a wheelchair, but is still recovering from a nasty fall. "Do you have a wife, luv?" Er yes. "Well, she'll tell you that green beans are a bit stringy." A conversation with Thora Hird takes some surreal tangents, but she always gets there in the end. "I was taking the strings off and, when I thought I'd done enough, I turned round a bit quickly, and that's when I fell. I was nearly three weeks in the hospital - we couldn't get the circulation going in my foot. There's a big word for it."

At 87, Thora is beyond political correctness, hence her beloved mink coat and the assumption that de-stringing green beans is women's work. But there is nothing fuddy-duddy about her. A week after our encounter, she was back at London Television Centre to appear on *This Morning*, and found herself in a lift with James Nesbitt, one of the stars of the racy relationship drama *Cold Feet*. Nesbitt hung his head while she scolded him about the amount of sex in *Cold Feet*. "I never miss it, though, luv," she added brightly.

She watches lots of television, and thinks there is far too much sex, but finds it amusing rather than offensive. "Did you see that one about the prostitutes?" she asks. She means *Vice: The Sex Trade*, the ITV series in which a woman was seen breastfeeding a grown man. "What made me laugh was when the interviewer called her a prostitute and she said: 'One minute, I'm not a prostitute,' as though she was doing something more honourable by putting a nappy on a fella and giving him his supper. 'Excuse me, I'm not a prostitute.' Such dignity. I thought: 'Dear God, you've offended the prostitutes.'"

Thora chuckles. She loves playing to an audience, even an audience of one, and she has dressed for the occasion. The mink is removed, with some difficulty to reveal a sequined black velvet trouser suit. She keeps her felt hat, which is speared with a huge pearl hat-pin. She is wearing shiny black sandals. Actually, she's a bit of an Imelda Marcos on the quiet, with 88 pairs of shoes. But her feet have swelled up since the fall, and she has to wear the sandals, which she loathes.

Thora takes great pride in her appearance. Her mottled hands are adorned with chunky rings, and she has long, polished fingernails. She is, in fact, quite a glam-puss.

This is a little disconcerting, the opposite of spotting Joan Collins in an old kagoule. The screen Thora Hird - as seen in films like *All My Loving*, and TV sitcoms such as *In Loving Memory* and *Last of the Summer Wine* - tends to be a frumpily-dressed creature. Moreover, you don't see women in mink coats chugging up Stanhope stairlifts, which she used to advertise on the telly, or presenting *Praise Be*, which she did for 17 years. And the incongruities don't stop there. Her daughter



is the former film starlet Janette Scott, who was once married to the singer Mel Torme and still lives in Beverly Hills. Has she been to Beverly Hills?

"Oh yes. Twenty-four times. It's perfect for a holiday, but there's no corner shop. You know what I mean, luv, don't yer? They're very nice to me there. I must say when they find out that I've played in the West End they say: 'Oh my Gaad.' She chuckles again. "Once, there was a director who thought of putting me in *Bonanza*, that show with thingummy [Lorne] Greene. I said: 'But my voice is Lancashire.' He said: 'That doesn't matter; we could have a cowboy whose mother comes from Lancashire.' What a laugh. From Lancashire."

From Morecambe, to be precise, where Thora Hird was born in May 1911. Her mother was an actress and her father was stage manager of the town's Royalty Theatre. "I first went on stage when I was eight weeks old as the illegitimate child of the village maiden, who was played by my mother," says Thora. "I like to say that it was the only part I've ever got through influence."

She had a happy childhood, although the death of her older sister, Olga, killed by a motorbike on Morecambe promenade, cast a long shadow. "She was buried on the day she was six, and my mother never stopped saying to me, even when I grew up: 'Don't forget to look both ways.' Thora

sighs. She needs no prodding to talk about Morecambe in the Twenties and Thirties, and recalls the young Eric Bartholomew, who followed her into showbiz and changed his name. He used to quip that he took the name of his home town - Morecambe. Thora laughs at that one. "I knew him long before he became Eric Morecambe," she says. "But we weren't particular friends. He was younger than me. I'm 87, y'know."

Amazingly, she is still in touch with a gaggle of childhood friends, "although I had two less Christmas cards to write this year". Among her classmates were Vera Muff, Madge Peel, Ada Lob and Maudie Poles. "You can't believe names like that, can you? When I worked with Freddie Frin-

ton (on the Sixties sitcom) *Meet The Wife*, I could finish him off just by mentioning those names."

At 17, Thora Hird became a cashier at the Lancaster and District Co-op, an unlikely stand-in for Rada, yet the Co-op was effectively her drama school. "I used to look at some of the customers and think, if I ever take up acting seriously, I'll play her." She played nearly all of them now. People say to me: "That woman was so lifelike." I say: "She is, she lives in Morecambe."

In 1931, she joined Morecambe rep,

earning £1 a week playing a succession of maids. Her big break was engineered by another Lancastrian, George Formby, who was already a big star when he saw her in

a play called *As You Are*. "He said to me: 'Ee you were good, I want the studios to see you.'" Soon afterwards, a white £5 note was delivered to cover her fare to London, and she arrived at Ealing Studios on the day war broke out.

"I got there just as the alert went, and even the man on the gate ran for it, so I followed everyone into the shelter and sat next to a woman from the restaurant who was shelling peas. All I could think was that I'd be late for my appointment. I didn't realize that everyone would be down there."

Like many people of her age, Thora's recollection of events 60-odd years ago is astonishing, even though she can be a little shaky on what happened yesterday. She tells me in extraordinary detail about a wartime incident on the platform of Oxford Circus Tube station, the gist being that an "inebriated" GI asked her how much she charged for sexual favours, and she replied: "I don't know, what do you mother and sister charge?" which made him cry. That anecdote reveals a side to the real Thora Hird that we sometimes see on screen, a sharp tongue and a caustic wit.

Latterly, her most cantankerous characters have been invented by Victoria Wood. She was wonderfully bad-tempered in a fleeting cameo in Wood's BBC1 sitcom, *Dinnerladies*, and downright nasty in the comedy-drama *Pot and Margaret*. "I think Victoria Wood is brilliant. Do you remember when that woman in *Pot and Margaret* found out that her mild-mannered son had had sex in her house? 'Not on my elderdown,' she said. That's one of my favourite lines."

Another favourite line was written, not surprisingly, by her favourite writer, Alan Bennett. "I can't recall the name of the play just now, but I played a woman who had to ask her son what the word 'lesbian' meant. 'It's women who sleep together, mum,' he said. 'Oh,' she said. 'Me and your Auntie Phyllis always slept together during the air raids.' That's marvellous, isn't it? Bennett is brilliant. You'd have to be very poor not to do something with his words."

Thora knows, I suspect, that she is selling herself short. Ten years ago, in Bennett's *Talking Heads*, she gave a remarkably moving performance in *Cream Cracker Under The Sofa*, and was no less affecting in the best of this year's *Talking Heads 2: Waiting For The Telegram*.

"He's not a fussy man, Bennett," she says. "When I'd done it, he just put his arm round my shoulders and said: 'Oh thank you.' It took me about a fortnight to learn and you have to learn it well because Bennett will tell you if you say 'it' and it's 'but'. That's what keeps my mind active, learning lines, and that's why I shall go on. But it's harder than it used to be. Jimmy was always on the book, you see."

She means Jimmy Scott, her husband of 56 years, who helped her learn her lines. He died four years ago, following a massive stroke, and Thora's matter-of-fact recollection of the day he collapsed could almost have been scripted by Alan Bennett.

"I've a lot of copper pans in my kitchen and I thought one had fallen on the floor. He'd fallen backwards into the bath and I'm ashamed to say I didn't know it was a stroke. I thought he'd fainted. I phoned my neighbour, Robert Kelly, the American painter of nudes and trees. Brilliant. He's a big man. But he was out. His wife called the ambulance and they took Jimmy to St Mary's Hospital where they're so prompt. I don't think he was picked up at 25 past nine in the morning, and at 12 o'clock they put him in a ward. But I doubt it would have made a difference."

"The strokes organisations have been so wonderful to me since then, I can't tell you, and I've been helping them raise money. I went to open a new place in Staffordshire, and another in Hull, and while I was having drinks with the Reverend this or that, a man came over and said: 'Can I have a word with you, Thora?' We had a conversation and the next day a lady said 'Do you remember that man you talked to last night. It was the first time he's spoken for four years'."

Thora shakes her head at the wonder of it all. In *Lost For Words*, very poignantly, her character has a massive stroke. "I don't mind telling you, luv, that I wept when I read the script," she says. And then she turns to her nurse, who has sat in on the interview. "I think it's time to go, luv," she says. "Will you fetch my mink?"

'Lost For Words' is on ITV on 3 January

Our favourite dame loves Beverly Hills but won't live there. "There's no corner shop. You know what I mean, don't yer luv?" The Lancashire vowels are still raw and, at 87, she is beyond political correctness. By Brian Viner

is the former film starlet Janette Scott, who was once married to the singer Mel Torme and still lives in Beverly Hills. Has she been to Beverly Hills?

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2/COMMENT AND LETTERS

Mandelson is wrong

Sir Peter Mandelson says in his letter of resignation: "...I do not believe I have done anything wrong or improper. But I should not, with all candour, have entered into the arrangement."

Wrong, on both counts. If Peter Mandelson can secure finance at advantageous terms why should he not purchase a house that he wants in the area he wants?

It is not the house purchase, the value of the house or the method of its financing which is crucial. What is central to the whole affair is disclosure or, more accurately, lack of disclosure.

By failing to disclose his arrangement with Geoffrey Robinson (and there are many opportunities to do so) he allows the public to conclude quite reasonably that there is something to hide.

Politicians are accountable to the voters who can only make an informed choice if all the facts are known. Concealment is to treat the electorate with contempt. Mandelson is to be applauded for resigning and for doing so quickly but he is wrong to suggest he has done nothing wrong or improper.

MICHAEL C WARREN

Sheffield

Sir: Just two days before Christmas, the season of good will to all men, another of our public figures has found out that such courtesies are rarely shown to politicians who make mistakes.

Since before the last election, Peter Mandelson has been a figure of hate for the press. Opposition and even some within the Labour Party had no particular opinion of Mr Mandelson before this event. But the all-too-familiar character assassination he has been subjected to over the last couple of days has left me feeling a great deal of sympathy for him.

For the sake of those who were so quick in judging him, and in the spirit of the season, I hope that they have no skeletons they would rather keep hidden. I also wish that we could all learn to be more understanding and tolerant of the mistakes of others.

TOBIAS MELIA
Crawley, West Sussex

Sir: I can't help reflecting that it would probably take a lot more than a third of a million pounds to cause the downfall of a Conservative minister.

KEVIN HOLLOWAY

Aberdeen

Sir: Peter Mandelson was wise to avoid the final responsibility for the Millennium Dome, but did he have to go to these lengths?

PETER REYNOLDS
Southport, Merseyside

Seasonal theology

Sir: One of the more tedious aspects of Christmas is the half-baked theology paraded by people who should know better.

Your leading article on 24 December claims that Jesus preached "all people are equal". If you read the Bible you will see he preached no such thing. And neither, until recently, did the Church.

Stranger still, you say the birth of Christ represents "the triumph of human creativity". The Son of God born of a virgin – human creativity? And have you not noticed Christianity teaches that triumph and creativity belong to God and insists humans should be humble?

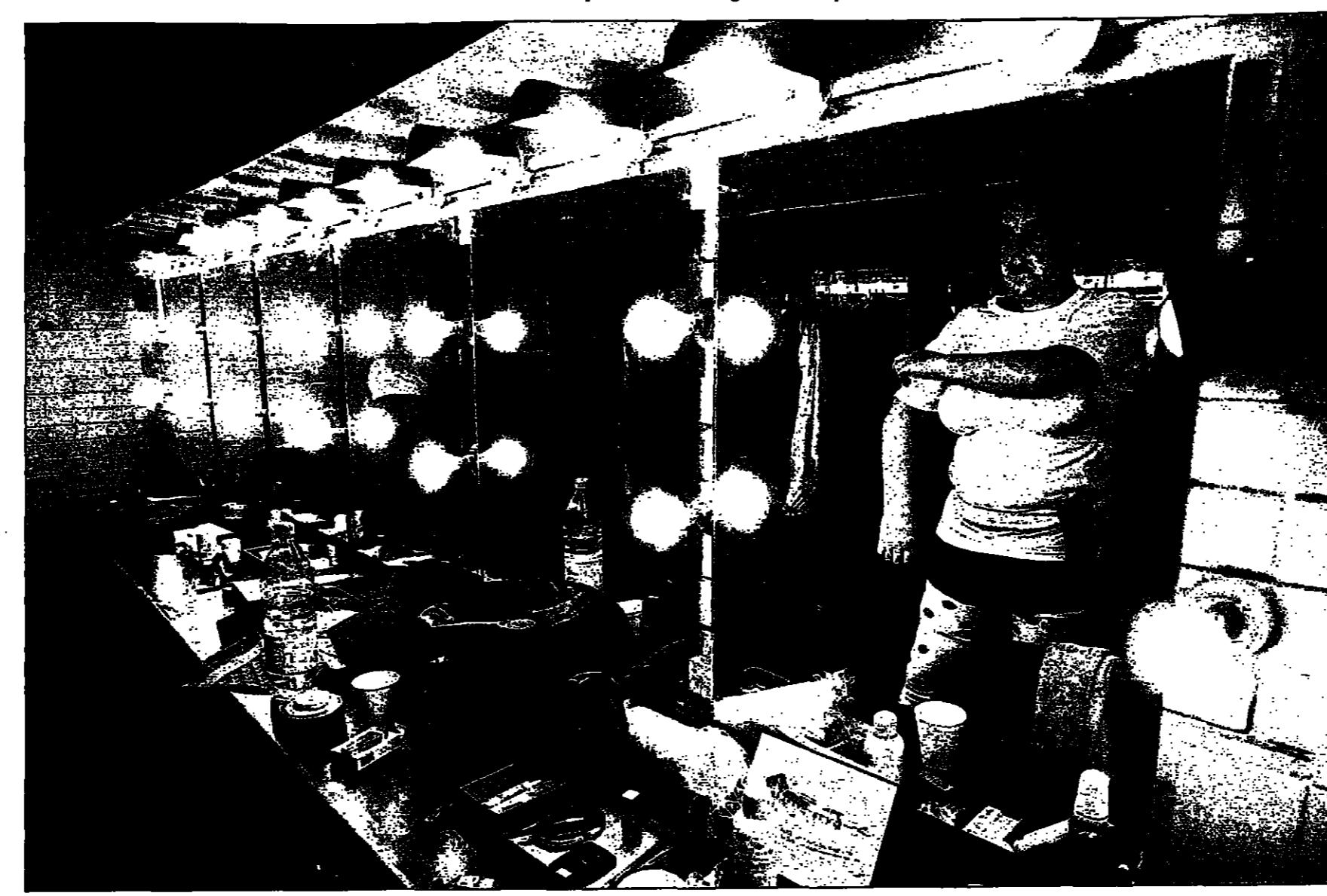
You have taken the humanist values you share with your readers and then reached for some religious touches to dress them up. But Christian ideas do not fit them, which perhaps explains why churches are so empty.

DAVID BISHOP

Brussels

Sir: Many adults do still "experience a feeling of great personal satisfaction from the simple act of being seasonably nice to someone" (letter, 18 December).

In our area a group of volunteers takes over the kitchen of a local school to cook, serve and share a Christmas dinner with



The panto season No 1: Steve Bennett prepares to go on stage as Sarah the cook in 'Dick Whittington', playing in Exeter

John Vos

about 60 local residents who would otherwise be lonely on Christmas day. Others help to man the homeless shelter, or deliver meals on wheels or carry out countless regular visits in support of the elderly, sick or disabled.

Whatever his needs or skills, I'm quite sure Mr Welch's local volunteer centre would be delighted to hear from him at any time of the year.

Merry Christmas,
FRANCES PENFOLD
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Duty-free bonanza

Sir: Your leading article (12 December) and various articles concerning the "duty-free pantomime" continue to overlook one of the most important aspects of the issue. There are political and employment aspects, but the key factor is money.

Duty-free retailing is fabulously profitable. The price charged is certainly not the normal retail price less the normal duty.

Operating ferries, airlines or airports at those profit margins would be impossible. One can buy a litre of duty-paid brandy in a normal shop in Spain for about £5. To buy a bottle of the same brandy in a duty-free store in England costs about £15.

The only real test of whether jobs may be lost is not counting those people employed in the duty-free industry but to ask "will people drink less, smoke less, use less perfume, have a smaller wardrobe and so on if they cannot buy them at duty-free prices?" and I guess the answer is "no".

And will travellers from abroad not wish to take home souvenirs from the country they visit, such as a bottle of Scotch from the UK, if they have to pay normal shop prices? I guess they will. So on the production and distribution side there should not be much change.

The other money issue concerns the Government. Rates of duty in the UK are so high and generate such an income stream for the Treasury that they have no

desire to reduce them in line with Europe. To do that would leave a gap in the revenue which would have to be filled with a compensating rise in other taxes.

We should be allowed to buy any products we want, wherever we want in Europe, at whatever price we are willing to pay, take them anywhere and do what we like with them, including selling them.

This duty-free situation is a true pantomime and, like all pantomimes, it should end after Christmas.

PHILIP EDWARDES-KER
Weybridge, Surrey

The name game

Sir: Your story about the Norwegian woman jailed for giving her son a name which is not on the country's approved list ("Jail for giving son illegal name", 24 December) prompted me to give thought to current trends in the names given to children in the UK.

The enthusiasm for hyphenated forenames, Emily-Jade, John-Paul, Lori-Lei etc, seems to be on the wane and has been replaced by parents personalising children's names through variations of spelling or pronunciation.

My understanding, which I assume was mistaken, was that Registrars of Births were required to advise parents on the usual

spellings of the chosen name for their child.

I wonder if they are actually creating confusion and difficulty for the owners of the names in an attempt to create something individual and personal.

Teachers are now frequently confused by the plethora of individual spellings, or by the non-standard pronunciation of well-established names.

Individual spellings which I have encountered recently include Danyell (Danielle), Kattie (Katie or Katy), Jayde (Jade), Mikala (Michaela), Ashlee (Ashley), Annal and Aimee (Amy), Lynnett (Lynette), I presume, rather than Linnet).

I'm not sure who is more confused: it is the ageing teacher, who is struggling to spell or pronounce the children's names according to the parents' wishes; or is it the children themselves who have to explain their names each time they encounter a new teacher and are likely to have to do so throughout their lives?

I have no objection to adults choosing to call themselves by whatever name they wish, but I think there needs to be some care and discretion in naming children – though not to the extent of jailing errant parents.

PHILIP PARKIN
Grimsby, Lincolnshire

IN BRIEF

shalt not kill" and leave the approval of such matters to the conscience of our elected representatives.

MARK WOODWARD
London E15

Sir: Andrew Marshall ("Allies split over banana war", 23 December) says that in the current USA vs Europe trade dispute "the casualty count will be lower" than in the attack on Iraq.

Not true, of course: if

America wins, the ensuing poverty in the Caribbean will lead to many more casualties than a few nights of bombing could ever achieve.

MAT COWARD

Frome, Somerset

Sir: Apart from immigrants,

almost everybody in this country is a descendant of economic migrants ("Who are these asylum-seeking scum?

They're people like my grandparents", 15 December).

Mrs L PALMER

Colchester, Essex

Our sterile gardens

Sir: Your correspondent on the disappearance of songbirds (letter, 16 December) has isolated the wrong predator, but identified one area offering great potential for sustaining our wild bird population. It is effectively a national park in our own back gardens.

In our desire to create the ideal home and garden, we have succeeded only in creating a barren and sterile environment. In urban and rural areas alike, we renovate and destroy. We remove food sources, safe shelter and potential nest sites. We use chemicals that kill.

A house I knew as a child had a large garden which provided food and cover enough for high-density populations of birds and mammals, both common and not so common. Even a hare reared her leverets there. But the place has been developed, the garden built upon, the outbuildings converted. The birds and animals have gone.

By contrast, close by, and therefore subject to the same environmental factors (including predation), there is an unconverted farm. It has rambling buildings, barns and a large manure heap. It offers a constant source of food and shelter and remains a paradise for birds, predator and prey alike.

Research evidence and common sense support this view,

yet the Government continues to support alternative child-care, ignoring the army of mothers who would prefer to care for their own babies at home if they were supported financially and socially to do so.

Families would also need reassurance that a work-re-entry system was in place for mothers once their children started school.

While the emotional needs of children during their crucial first three years are misunderstood or ignored, adult Attachment Disorder tragedies will increase.

SUE CLASEN
Chairman
What About The Children
Pershore, Hereford and Worcester

Humanity for Iraq

Sir: Your correspondent Robert Fisk has been trying, seemingly in vain, to remind Britain and America that the policies they are pursuing towards the Arabs of the Middle East are misguided and wrong.

Now Mr Blair and company talk about keeping Saddam Hussein in a cage, but has it never occurred to them that caging an angry man only adds to his fury, which will be in nobody's interest?

Perhaps the leaders of the United States and Britain might, during this season of goodwill, reflect on and heed the advice given by a truly good man shared by both countries, William Penn of England and Pennsylvania: "For if men did see we love them, we should soon find they would not harm us. Force may subdue but love gains, and he that forgives first wins the laurel."

Perhaps a little understanding and humane treatment of Iraq, together with some honest evaluation of the problem in the Middle East, will let all out of their cages.

Or are such sentiments and hopes alien to the scheming natures of the present-day leaders of the western world?

IR RASMY
Honiton,
Devon

Sir: I have recently returned from Baghdad, where for one-and-a-half years it was my job to report the progress of the humanitarian Oil for Food programme.

Ministers and senior members of the Opposition frequently state that the Iraqi leadership have diverted supplies under this programme. This is a serious error.

Some 150 international observers, travelling throughout Iraq, reported to the United Nations Multidisciplinary Observer Unit, of which I was the head. At no time was any diversion recorded. I made this clear in our reports to the UN Secretary General, and he reported in writing to the Security Council accordingly.

In the case of private donations outside the Oil for Food programme, those which arrived by air were observed by us, and no diversion was recorded. Humanitarian supplies arriving by road were not within our remit, although my contact with the Iraqi Red Crescent, which has a co-ordination role, would suggest no diversion.

With regard to private medical donations, again nothing directly to do with the Oil for Food programme, there has sometimes been confusion. All supplies, in accordance with international practice, should have been vetted before distribution by the government testing authority, Kimadia. (Some suppliers, in ignorance, tried to avoid this). I know of more than one occasion when outdated medicines arrived, and Kimadia was naturally reluctant for them to be distributed.

Bombing Iraq is a matter of the utmost seriousness, in particular in view of the civilian casualties. It is imperative at the very least that our facts are correct.

MICHAEL STONE
Polruan,
Cornwall

Roundly irritating

Sir: The latest complaint in The Irritations of Modern Life wrongly refers to "round robins" (Review, 23 December).

A round robin is not a circular letter from one person to several people.

It is a collective letter from several people to one person, usually in the form of a protest or petition about a grievance, with the signatures arranged in a circle so that no one's name appears at the top, in order to avoid the victimisation of ringleaders.

One of the most irritating irritations of modern life is the way people get this kind of thing wrong.

ANNA FREEMAN
Leighton Buzzard,
Bedfordshire

My recipe for surviving the Twelve Days after Christmas

WE GET a lot of advice about the run-up to Christmas – cooking, last minute shopping, etc – but no advice at all on what to do in the aftermath, no post-Christmas counselling as it were.

So in this ground-breaking column I am going to talk you through the wind-down from Christmas Day to Twelfth Night, detailing what exactly happens on each day, so that you can tick things off as they occur.

(I am assuming that I am addressing a thoroughly typical British family, that is a single parent with partner, 1.5 children, two relations you remember inviting and five you don't.)

First Night

All the presents are opened and all the food eaten, except the nuts, Turkish delight, half the turkey etc,

etc. Paracetamol all gone, though. One of you says: "Well, that's all over, then, thank God". The other says: "Not by a long chalk".

The phone rings.

It's a relation in a far-off country. "Belinda!" you cry. "Happy Christmas! We tried to ring earlier, but all lines were busy."

You know you have to thank Belinda for a present, but you can't remember off-hand what it is, so you mouth to your partner: "What did I get from Belinda?"

Your partner thinks you are saying: "Have you switched off the blender?", goes to have a look and never comes back.

Second Night

You find a present under the Christmas Tree which nobody has opened and which has no label on it. Nobody recognises it.

A child says to you: "I can't make this toy work. Can you make it work for me?" You can't.

The smell of turkey stock is heard in the land.

Third Night

Your partner says: "Have you seen that I made of who gave which present to whom?" You haven't.

Fourth Night

You prepare to dispose of all the wrapping paper, but think you should go through it first in case you find any valuables. You don't.

Fifth Night

You wake up convinced that you have switched off the blender.

The Maltese Falcon on TV last night and understood everything that happened. This is clearly impossible. You go back to sleep.

A grand expedition to the bottle bank is mounted.

A small glass ornament falls off

the tree and breaks. The dog tries to eat it.

In a quiet moment, you say to

your partner: "Never again". Your partner says: "Never".

You don't actually define which bit of Christmas you're talking about.

Sixth Night

Still no sign of the return of the grand expedition to the bottle bank.

Should you tell someone?

Three cards arrive in the post,

two from people you didn't send cards to,

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Mr Blair's faith in his 'project' may well be misplaced

MINISTERS MAY fall, but the "Project New Labour" is still steaming ahead, said Tony Blair yesterday, before jetting off to the Seychelles for his place in the sun. He should be so lucky.

In the first place, Mr Mandelson isn't just any minister. He is the key member of the team that created "New Labour", or at least the Blairite revolution as defined in the world of sound-bites, focus groups and rhetoric. In his absence, Mr Blair has not only lost a close supporter but one whose weight – and access to the Prime Minister – shaped the balance of power in the Government. Without him, other forces are bound to move to fill the vacuum, in an air already poisoned by accusations that his downfall was plotted in the court of Chancellor Gordon Brown. As history has shown repeatedly, the way to wound a king is always by hurting the closest adviser.

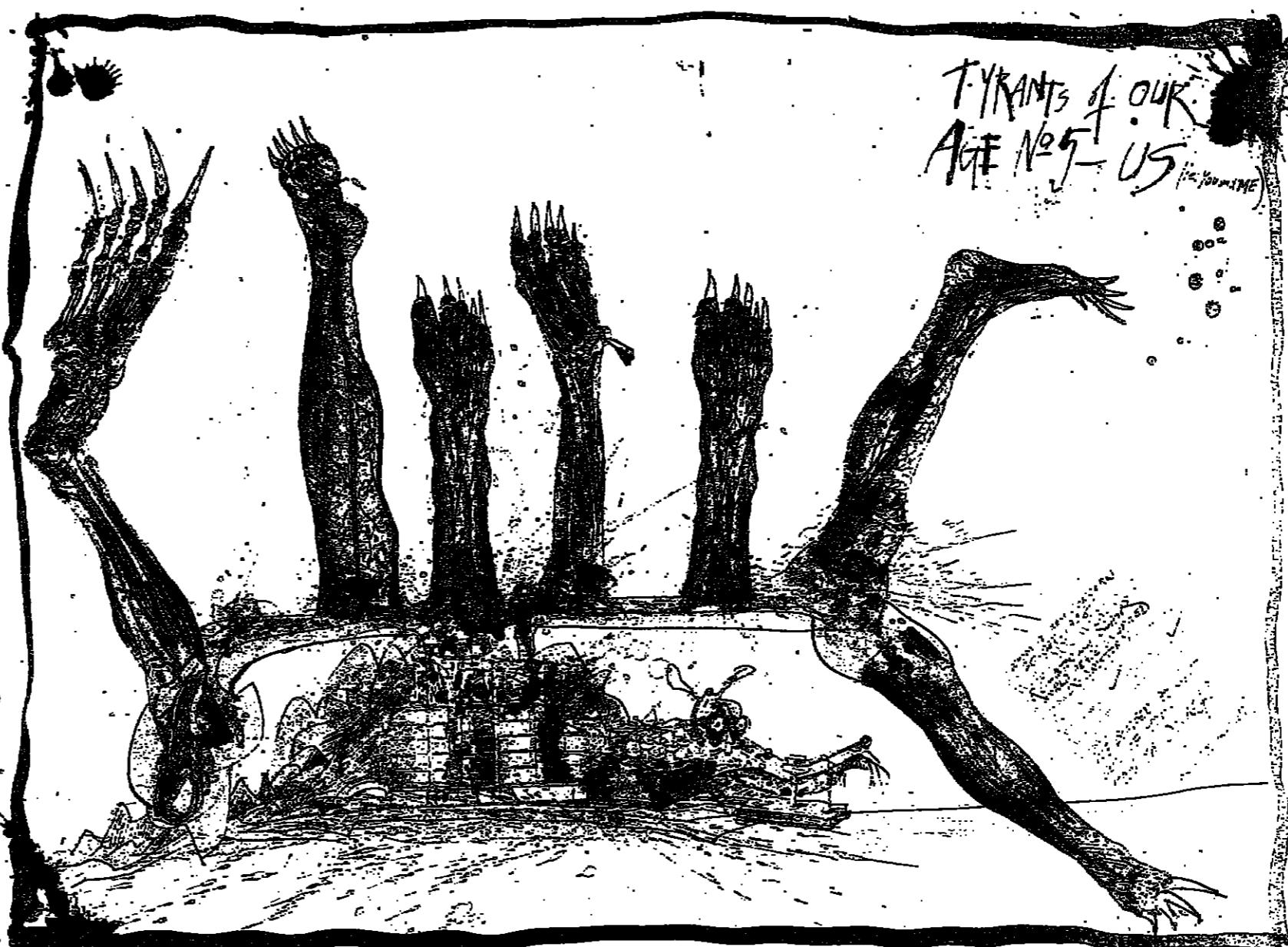
And as Mr Brown moves in from one direction, his opponents are closing in from others. The combination of John Prescott and Robin Cook, which we report today, is not just an alliance of the previously marginalised in the Labour Cabinet. It could mark the resurgence of that significant group in Labour which has never been fully committed to Mr Blair's cherished vision.

Which brings in the other point. "Project New Labour" was fine as a slogan for opposition, a standard by which the forces of the left could present a more reassuring and modern face to the voting public. But Labour isn't in opposition anymore. It is in government – 18 months into government, indeed. And it will be defined by what it does with power.

In that sense the Prime Minister could understandably argue in his radio interview yesterday that all this concentration on personalities is out of proportion. It is education, the economy and health which matter and those will have to be dealt with whether or not Mandelson or Robinson are present in government. But appearances do matter today.

Peter Mandelson didn't resign because he broke the rules of ministerial behaviour. He went because, after a day of trying to justify his behaviour, it became apparent that the press and the public weren't going to wear it. So as his rivals feud and bicker like so many medieval barons, the man who most understood New Labour is in exile.

Now comes the great test for the Government, the one on which all governments ultimately succeed or fail: namely, the test of competence. Far from this being just a case of a minister who did wrong, who resigned and "it's over", as Mr Blair argued yesterday, his problems of prime ministership are only just beginning. Can we suggest a biography of Harold Wilson as his holiday reading in the Seychelles?



Negotiations will help Sierra Leone, not guns

JUST WHEN the cause of African democracy seemed to be improving with the developments towards early elections in Nigeria, it has been set back on its heels again in Sierra Leone, where a rebel force seems once more determined to bring down the democratically-elected government there. The fact that the West African contingent of troops sent in there to preserve democracy is led by the Nigerians only makes it worse; still more so that the government was armed by British companies with the

apparent connivance of our own Government. As Tony Blair said earlier in the year, it may have all been in a noble cause. But noble causes don't help the tens of thousands of civilians who have become, once again, the victims of the latest upsurge in violence.

The problem in Sierra Leone is, yet again, the presence of minerals and the nature of the land. Just as in Angola, or Zaire, military intervention can defend the towns, but so long as the rebels in the country can have access to diamonds or other goods, then they can survive and arm themselves. Should we then despair? The answer has to be no. Because the West has to bear some responsibility for what goes on in the Forgotten Continent, not least because its purchases still fuel the funds of rebellion, while its arms exports give the means of revolt. Where the Anglo-

la crisis has drawn in the armies of five different African nations and threatens to set off the first all-African war this century, Sierra Leone has not drawn in its neighbours in the same way. Intervention has been organised regionally and multi-nationally through the Economic Community of West African States (Ecwas), which is to meet again today to consider the situation.

Fighting could still get a great deal worse. But that is surely the lesson of Sierra Leone, just as it is of Kosovo. Immediate solutions are not always readily available. The responsibility of the outside world is not to meddle, still less to try to change the military power by arming one side or another. It is to promote stability by negotiation through the offices of international organisations and to keep on doing so even when the fighting appears to be eternal.

The people's trust may no longer be enough to solve Blair's dilemma

LIKE TS ELIOT'S nifty malfeasant Macavity, Geoffrey Robinson, the catalyst of so much Government mayhem, stole away quietly from the scene of the commotion at the end of 1998, murmuring something about it being time to go while looking as if he had not the faintest idea why everyone around him was so worked up.

Meanwhile, Peter Mandelson spent Christmas at his mum's, where he was photographed looking strangely vulnerable, as men do around Christmas when they are wearing a very new sweater. It would be unfair of Mr Mandelson to say that nothing in his political life became him like the leaving of it. But by going quickly and, even more importantly, with good grace, he has stored up some blessings for himself. The precedents for ousted ministers returning to Cabinet are not good. But Mr Mandelson has broken more than one precedent in his career. He'll be back.

The departures of Mandelson and Robinson were a kind of bonfire of the vanities. Two separate but inter-linked dramatic plots inside New Labour detonated simultaneously. The Brownites and the Blairites in New Labour's simmering internal feud lost a player each. Despite the greater importance of Mr Mandelson, it is the Brownites who will take the harder loss. None dare call it treason, yet there are a lot of very disruptive questions about why news of the private loan surfaced and how much Mr Robinson's offers of largesse were intended to shore up an alternative power-base grouped around the Chancellor.

In 1998, the Brown camp lost the

Chancellor's loyal namesake Nick Brown from the strategically significant position of Chief Whip. No 10 will continue the purge by ensuring that the next Paymaster General is far less colourful than Mr Robinson and nowhere near as doggedly devoted to Gordon Brown.

The Prime Minister, albeit by an unexpected and circuitous route, gets back the state of affairs he described after the election as "Peter going on being Peter", which means Peter being on call for Tony when Tony has an election campaign to plan and the pro-Euro campaign to sort out. If ever there were a time when Mr Blair needed a spare brain unencumbered by ministerial cares, this is it.

The third year in office is the time when we can reasonably ask which of the Government's plans are on course and which have gone walkabout.

by some rather ragged diplomacy from the German government to defend his *de facto* policy of British entry into the single currency and drop the pretence that he is still waiting and seeing. The starting signal for the British referendum battle has been given in Bonn. Mr Blair has no choice but to allow the argument to rage in the run-up to the next election. Mr Mandelson is now the obvious figurehead for the "yes" camp. His presence would demand that the opponents of EMU find an equally persuasive and professional candidate to oppose him in the war of the television studios.

A great deal of Mr Blair's popularity is down to his ability to combine an unstilted and understanding manner with statesmanship. The combination has served him well in the run-up to the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland. But the end of the year

approaches, the deadlines come and go, and there has been no IRA decommissioning. This state of affairs is becoming intolerable for even more overtly Old Labour direction will be considerable. In Wales, Mr Blair may yet find that there are no means fair or foul to rid himself of the disgustingly chirpy and very unreconstructed Rhodri Morgan. The European elections offer a rescue rope to William Hague, who will profit from the introduction of the PR system he opposes. Labour will lose a lot of seats, which does not matter much of itself, but will be the first sign that the party is vulnerable to the slings and arrows of elections.

Politics is more than the sum of its parts. Successful leaders need to preserve the sense of living through events with the electorate and of sharing the same joys and woes. The pressures of the last year have seen Mr Blair becoming more distant from the rest of us.

Sometimes, in the edge of my political vision, I have the sense that the Prime Minister is disappearing. Too often, it is his Government colleagues who are making the news and he who provides the damage limitation, as he showed yesterday in a rather uncomfortable defence of Mr Mandelson. We see less of him where he is at his spontaneous best and more presidential mode of interviews and formal addresses.

He has not yet forfeited that most precious of political commodities: instinctive trust. But he must be aware that it is vulnerable, and that without it, the noblest intentions turn swiftly to dust.



ANNE McELVOY
The third year is when we can ask which government plans are on course and which have gone walkabout

by some rather ragged diplomacy from the German government to defend his *de facto* policy of British entry into the single currency and drop the pretence that he is still waiting and seeing. The starting signal for the British referendum battle has been given in Bonn. Mr Blair has no choice but to allow the argument to rage in the run-up to the next election. Mr Mandelson is now the obvious figurehead for the "yes" camp. His presence would demand that the opponents of EMU find an equally persuasive and professional candidate to oppose him in the war of the television studios.

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FOR THE time being, Peter Mandelson is damaged goods: his arrogance and recklessness has done incalculable damage to the Government. And it isn't over yet.

But lessons can be learned. Honesty and humility would be two good new resolutions for New Labour.

PETER MANDELSON had to resign from Tony Blair's Cabinet for unwisely accepting a

huge loan from Geoffrey Robinson, then keeping quiet about it. But a man of his flair and commitment shouldn't be sidelined for long. An early return to government is out of the question. But there is one role he is uniquely qualified for: making sure the Millennium Dome is a roaring success when it opens a year from now.

Sunday People

"Third Way" is to have no big idea beyond that of winning and retaining power through presentation. That the very architect of the strategy has himself crashed to earth is an

object lesson Mr Blair should take to heart.

The Mail on Sunday

IT LOOKS increasingly as though the big idea behind the

sorry affair. With a New Year approaching, the PM should tell his feuding ministers to get on with the business of government. We would have hoped that Labour had learned the lessons of the John Major years, that when ministers rip each other part, the Government descends into chaos and incompetence.

We expect better from this Government. The events of the past week have badly damaged confidence in its ability to

deliver. So, new year, new start please.

The Express on Sunday

MAKE NO mistake, we have not seen the last of Mr M. Will he take us into Europe or pop up elsewhere on the political scene? Has he ruled out wanting to be the first mayor of London? Whatever it is, he will surely be a wiser and humbler man when the moment comes.

News of the World

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I really don't go round asking my Cabinet members how they paid for their houses."

Tony Blair
Prime Minister

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The unexamined life is not worth living."
Socrates
Greek philosopher

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Sir Francis McLean

A FEW days after the American 12th Army Group liberated Luxembourg in September 1944 Francis McLean, the 40-year-old Chief Engineer of the Psychological Warfare Division of the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (PWD Shaeff), went there from Paris to make sure that the Allies would be able to use Radio Luxembourg's powerful transmitter for psychological warfare against the German Army, still only a few miles away. McLean found that the studios in the centre of the city were in full working order. But, before retreating, the Germans had taken care to immobilise the station by firing pistol shots through all the valves of the 120-kilowatt transmitter at Junglinster, some 12 miles outside the capital.

Fortunately an unsung Luxembourg hero, W. Scholtes, the chief engineer at Junglinster, happened to know that a complete set of reserve valves was held at a nearby post office. McLean soon had Radio Luxembourg ready for service again on its wavelength of 1295m.

A mixed military and civilian team of amateur American psychological warriors attached to 12th Army Group were the first programme men on the scene. They belonged to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the CIA. An experienced Anglo-American group was sent to Luxembourg to broadcast on behalf of PWD Shaeff - shortly afterwards augmented by a strong contingent from the BBC's European Service.

The OSS men took the line that they had saved the station and they resented being overshadowed by professional broadcasters who had not. Moreover they wanted to start a purely American enterprise, which they called "Operation Annie", using the transmitter for "black" propaganda purporting to come from dissidents within Germany. The PWD Shaeff people, especially the British, considered that this scheme would endanger the credibility of the Allies' open or "white" broadcasts.

One of the OSS commanders asked McLean whether it would be possible to use the Junglinster transmitter on a different wavelength during the night after Radio Luxembourg had closed down. By when could they know whether it was technically feasible and how long would it take to alter the wavelength each time?

Within three days McLean provided the answers. It could be done

and the wavelength change would only take 20 minutes. So "Operation Annie" went into action. At midnight an oboe signature tune introduced a strong new station calling itself Radio Twelve Twelve (the changed wavelength) to broadcast until 5.30am. It ran until the end of hostilities. McLean's solution pleased the OSS men and relieved the PWD Shaeff contingent at Luxembourg - which I was shortly to join - of the pressure to carry "black" transmissions alongside straightforward ones. McLean himself had the satisfaction of knowing that he had done in three days what would take BBC engineers by normal procedures many weeks to achieve. Whether Radio Twelve Twelve deceived the German authorities or shortened the war by a single minute is another matter.

McLean, who was an accomplished linguist, brought to his Shaeff task substantial experience of collaboration with European engineers. After graduating from Birmingham University he joined Western Electric and worked for three years on the design of high-power radio transmitters before being transferred to IT&T's Research Laboratories in Paris. From 1938 to 1932 he was involved in designing high-power equipment for both broadcasting and telephone transmission in Italy, Switzerland, France, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In 1938 he married Dorothy Blackstaffe. They had known each other since their early teens.

On their return to England

McLean's design work was particularly concerned with the BBC's short- and medium-wave transmitter equipment and in 1937 he joined the corporation's Station Design and Installation Department as head of the radio section. He was temporarily sent in 1938-39 to the Cavendish and Liverpool laboratories to help on problems connected with the atom-splitter cyclotron. From 1939 to 1943 he was deeply involved in the BBC's wartime expansion of short-wave transmissions and monitoring stations.

He also designed transmitters for the War Reporting Unit, and in 1943 was seconded to the Psychological Warfare Division of Shaeff as Chief Engineer. In the planning of "Overlord" he made preparations for mobile transmitters as well as for recommissioning European radio stations. In August 1944 he was the first BBC man to enter Paris after its liberation, even ahead of the war correspondents. He reactivated



McLean, left, in 1944, demonstrating his separation of wavelengths between Radio Luxembourg and the 'black' Radio Twelve Twelve.

With him are, standing from left, Leonard Miall, Lt-Col S.R. Rosenblum, Lindley Fraser (later Head of the BBC German Service), Ralph Poston (later Director of Broadcasting, Palestine), Noel Newsome (BBC Director of European Broadcasts) and Etienne Amyot (later BBC Third Programme planner); and, sitting, Patrick Gordon Walker (later Foreign Secretary) and Robin Gordon Walker

ed various French transmitters before moving on to Luxembourg. Later in the war he recommissioned transmitters in Leipzig, Hamburg and other captured German cities, putting to good use the information on the location of spare valves he had gathered at Junglinster.

After the war McLean's career was a steady climb up the ladder of the BBC engineering directorate to the very top. Though necessarily interested in programmes his chief concern and fascination was always in technical developments. He retained his international connections, journeying in 1946 to Singapore to plan the BBC's Far East Relay Station, and later to the Indian sub-continent as an adviser to Radio Pakistan. From 1952 he led the BBC delegations to many international

conferences on channel allocation, frequency modulation (FM), stereo and, above all, colour television.

As early as 1953, McLean read a paper to the British Association on "The Application of Colour to Television Broadcasting". In 1956 he delivered a Faraday Lecture on the same subject to large audiences in 23 cities in the United Kingdom and to one in Brussels, where he spoke in French. The same year he was invited to give the Granada lecture at Guildhall on telecommunications in the next 10 years. This ITV gesture represented the first thaw in the cold war between the BBC and its commercial competitor.

McLean recognised that the principal technical problems of television at that time were to define and achieve good colour, to plan the new

625-line UHF network (first used in 1964 for BBC2) so as to permit the eventual closure of the original 405-line VHF network, and to make possible the unattended operation of transmitters and studio equipment. He played a leading role in solving all of them.

By the time McLean became Director of Engineering in 1963 the introduction of colour television was

high on the broadcasting agenda. One difficulty was the absence of an internationally agreed system. The Americans had established NTSC - initials of the National Television Systems Committee, though cynics said the letters could equally stand for Never Twice the Same Colour. The French come along with SECAM, a different system of colour transmission which, like NTSC, was re-

ceivable on black-and-white sets, but claimed certain advantages over it. The rival merits of NTSC and SECAM were argued at many international forums, with McLean firmly on the side of NTSC. Then the Germans developed PAL, basically NTSC but with certain additional features. This was the system much of Western Europe eventually adopted.

The world's colour television was

then split three ways, with Canada, the United States and much of Latin America, plus Japan, committed to NTSC; half of Europe, including Britain and Germany, and much of the Commonwealth committed to PAL; and France, the Communist

bloc and some others committed to SECAM, threatening to make the

ready international exchange of programmes impossible. Fortu-

nately such a fate was avoided by the timely BBC invention of the electronic standards converter.

Sir Francis McLean (he was knighted in 1967) described this sophisticated equipment as "the result of both inspiration and hard work - the secret of engineering development". It converted systems as well as standards, and was thus able in 1968 to provide European television with an Olympic Games service of PAL or SECAM colour pictures on the 625-line 50-field standard which originated in Mexico from NTSC cameras working on the 525-line 60-field standard. The absence of internationally agreed system and standards had ceased to matter.

McLean gave the greatest encouragement to design development and research. He had a first-class brain and probably made a greater contribution to the BBC than any previous Director of Engineering. He was a stern but fair boss who disliked privilege and grumbled when he was accorded VIP treatment.

After his retirement from the BBC in 1968 he became the technical director of a company set up by ICI and CBS to develop a system of television recording and in 1972 he chaired a Royal Commission on FM Broadcasting in Australia. His report was accepted and implemented by the Australian government. From 1961 to 1972 he was Chairman of the BSI Telecommunications Standards Committee.

McLean's retirement also changed his life style. He and his wife moved to Newbury. Alongside his professional work he spent 10 years raising sheep on a small farm. He became the President of the Newbury District Field Club, a century-old society concerned with local history and the like. In 1978 they moved to nearby Wootton Hill, where McLean in his eighties produced very acceptable white wine from his garden while still taking a lively interest in the latest developments in broadcasting and telecommunications.

LEONARD MIALL

Francis Charles McLean, broadcasting engineer: born 6 November 1904; Chief Engineer, Psychological Warfare Division, Shaeff 1943-45; MBE 1945, CBE 1953; Deputy Chief Engineer, BBC 1952-60, Deputy Director of Engineering 1960-63; Director of Engineering 1963-68; knighted 1967; married 1930 Dorothy Blackstaffe (one son, one daughter); died 19 December 1998.



"Finders, keepers"

MEL FISHER was an opportunist who embodied the dictum "Finders, keepers". Initially equipped only with flippers and goggles, the one-time chicken farmer recovered hundreds of thousands of gold and silver coins, jewellery and ingots from Spanish shipwrecks in the waters off Florida.

For years he doggedly hunted the cargo of a single treasure-packed galleon, the *Nuestra Señora de Atocha*, which sank in 1622 near the Florida Keys. When he and his son Kane found the wreck in 1985, they recovered treasure worth \$400m and as a result Fisher, his family

and his long-suffering investors became millionaires.

In the murky world of treasure hunters, Fisher was a hero, a fixture of Key West who could often be found - wearing a trademark gold bolo tie around his neck - in dockside bars, talking long into the night about his underwater adventures. When asked why he had chosen the risky and uncertain trade, he said, "For the fun, the romance and the adventure." While he searched for treasure he liked to repeat hopefully, "Today is the day."

But Fisher's success in discovering treasure in an era when salvage

was based on British admiralty law, which held salvagers' work to be in the public interest, did not endear him to environmentalists, historians and archaeologists. Their efforts to persuade US authorities to control the salvage trade eventually produced the 1967 Abandoned Shipwreck Act, which put an end to admiralty law and conveyed the rights to wrecks discovered within three miles of the coastline to the states.

Fisher spent much of his time and money in court, fending off efforts to "take his treasure", as he put it, but the new laws made his business untenable and, by June 1998, of thou-

sands of known wrecks, fewer than 20 were under salvage permit. About half of those were Fisher's.

Mel Fisher was born in 1922, hundreds of miles from the sea, in Gary, Indiana, and was trained as a hydraulic engineer at Alabama University. However, he turned his attention to poultry farming in California, and then went on to open a skindiving shop in Redondo Beach. He began diving for bounty, and, on discovering there was little to be had off the California coast, moved his family to Florida and became a serious treasure hunter. "What Mel lived on was that

American dream and being able to actually fulfil it. He let nothing stand in his way," said Pat Clyne, Fisher's spokesman at the Mel Fisher Maritime Heritage Society Museum in Key West. However, his lust for adventure came at a price. In 1975, his son Dirk drowned hunting treasure inside a ship just days after discovering the first signs of the *Atocha* wreck. It took the Fisher clan another decade to find the "mother lode" of gold and silver in the *Atocha* cargo that would be their greatest find.

Fisher never strayed far from controversy. Last month he admitted selling counterfeit gold coins at his

gift shop in Key West, and agreed to repay to purchasers the prices of the coins - from \$2,500 to \$10,000 - which had been sold on the understanding that they were from a 1733 Spanish fleet that went aground off the Keys. In a negotiated plea, Fisher pledged that his company would sell only coins recovered from shipwrecks to which it had salvage rights.

EDWARD HELMORE

Mel Fisher, treasure hunter: born Gary, Indiana, 1922; married (three sons, one daughter, and one son deceased); died Key West, Florida 19 December 1998.

GAZETTE

BIRTHDAYS

King Birendra of Nepal, 53; Mr Intikhab Alam, cricketer, 57; Mr Terry Butcher, footballer, 40; Sir Ellis Clarke, former President, Trinidad and Tobago, 81; Major Madeleine Cragg, Registrar, General Osteopathic Council, 53; Mr Thomas Gould VC, 84; Mr Max Hastings, Editor, *The Evening Standard*, 53; Lord Hattersley, former government minister, 66; Mr Noel Johnson, actor, 82; Mr Nigel Kennedy, violinist, 42; Mrs Frances Morrell, former leader, Ila, 61; Sir Patrick O'Connor, former Lord Justice of Appeal, 84; Mrs Margaret Prentice MP, 46; Mr Simon Raven, writer, 71; Mrs Joan Ruddock MP, 55; Dame Maggie Smith, actress, 64; The Right Rev William Westwood, former Bishop of Peterborough, 73.

ANNIVERSARIES

Births: Sir Archibald Geikie, geologist, 1835; Thomas Woodrow Wilson, 28th US

President, 1856; Philip Will Steer, artist, 1860; Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington, astronomer, 1882; St John Greer Ervine, playwright and critic, 1883; Roger Huntingdon Sessions, composer, 1896. Deaths: St Francis de Sales, 1622; Queen Mary II of William and Mary, 1694; Rob Roy (Robert MacGregor), clan chief, 1734; Thomas Babington Macaulay, first Baron Macaulay, author and statesman, 1859; Thomas Creswick, painter, 1859; George Robert Gossing, novelist, 1903; Alexandre-Gustave Eiffel, engineer, 1923; Maurice Joseph Ravel, composer, 1937; Theodore Herman Albert Dreiser, novelist, 1945; Victor Emmanuel III, former King of Italy, 1947; Jack Lovelock, athlete and surgeon, killed 1949; Paul Hindemith, composer, 1963; Max (Maximilian) Raoul Steiner, film music composer, 1971; Sam Peckinpah, film director, 1984. On this day: Westminster Abbey was dedicated, 1065; in the United States, the first patent for chewing gum was issued, 1869; the centre portion of

the Tay Bridge in Scotland collapsed, taking with it a train, including 75 passengers and crew, 1879; Messina, Sicily, was almost completely destroyed by an earthquake when over 150,000 lives were lost, 1908; the Irish Free State became the Republic of Ireland, 1937. Today is the Feast Day of St Antony of Padua, The Holy Innocents (Childermas) and St Theodore the Sanctified.

LECTURES

Victoria and Albert Museum: Imogen Stewart, "The Christmas Story in English Medieval Embroidery", 2pm.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am; 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards mounts the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Welsh Guards.

Whose Christmas is it anyway?

MEANINGS OF CHRISTMAS

PAUL HANDLEY

At last, it seems the Church may be catching up with what ordinary people have always known about the way to celebrate the birth of Christ

the majority, they have to work with the choices that majority makes. This is an uncomfortable position to be in, but what was essence of the Incarnation if it wasn't God making the best of a bad job? And just imagine the alternative: a priesthood with political power. In the theocracy that would emerge, the object to be protected would cease to be the people, and become instead the beliefs in which the priesthood's power resided. Remember the Inquisition? Not for nothing was God incarnated as a helpless baby.

And so to Christmas. What is happening here is that the democratising process is being applied to the stuff of Christianity itself, and, once again, the Church is powerless to stop it. In the past, the divines had worked out a proper shape for Christmas: a preparatory period of abstinence and reflection on the four last things, death, judgement, heaven and hell - just to get people in the right mood for the festivities, the right mood being one of sober joy, awe, humility and prayerfulness. The post-Christmas period was interspersed with commemorations that reinforced the message: the feast of the holy innocents and the stoning of the first martyr. When the priesthood was powerful enough to set the trend, this was thought an appropriate response to the glorious mystery of the Incarnation.

Too earnest for us, though, and so the whole business has been turned on its head. The celebrations and festivities start long before Christmas Day, and the period for sober reflection, if there has to be one, has attached itself to the doldrums between Christmas and New Year (though not, as yet, to New Year's Eve itself).

And what's this? Christian professionals are starting to appear more relaxed. Once again, the movement began with the parish clergy, for whom December is now booked out with carol services and Christingles, and has extended up the hierarchy. To judge how far it has gone one has to look for signs of omission: it will be some time yet before you hear sermons in praise of unbridled commercialism, but the time may come. The Archbishop of York may have begun the process by contrasting, in a newspaper sermonette, the humility of the first nativity not with the glitz of the Millennium Dome - the kind of move which is known in PR circles as a "swerve". And instead of dwelling on the things lost - patience, anticipation, reflection - our church leaders praise elements of the "new" Christmas: the extension of generosity, hospitality, charity, family responsibility and over cheerfulness.

Yes, this is a sign of the Church's weakness, and its inability to order even its own business; but thank goodness for it. What it really means is that, perchance, our spiritual guardians are having to acknowledge the innate moral robustness and good sense of the ordinary people. It was to these people, after all, that Jesus first appeared.

Paul Handley is Editor of the 'Church Times'

My last junk food binge drove me to crispbread

I DECIDED to clean out the fridge the other day. We don't usually clean out our fridge. We just box it up every four or five years and send it off to the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta with a note to help themselves to anything that looks scientifically promising. But we hadn't seen one of the cats for a few days and I had a vague recollection of having glimpsed something furry on the bottom shelf towards the back - turned out to be a large piece of Gorgonzola.

So there I was, down on my knees unwrapping pieces of foil and peering cautiously into Tupperware containers when I came across an interesting product called a breakfast pizza. I examined it with a kind of rueful fondness, as you might regard an old photograph of yourself dressed in clothes that you cannot believe you ever thought were stylish. The breakfast pizza, you see, represented the last surviving relic of a bout of very serious retail foolishness on my part.

Some weeks ago I announced to my wife that I was going to the

supermarket with her next time she went because the stuff she kept bringing home was - how can I put this? - not fully in the spirit of American eating. Here we were living in a paradise of junk food - the country that gave the world cheese in a spray can and she kept bringing home healthy stuff like fresh broccoli and packets of Ryvita.

It was because she was English, of course. She didn't really understand the rich, unrivaled possibilities for greasiness and goo that the American diet offers. I longed for artificial bacon bits, melted cheese in a shade of yellow unknown to nature, and creamy chocolate fillings, sometimes all in the same product. I wanted food that squirts when you bite into it or oozes onto your shirt front in such gross quantities that you have to rise carefully from the table and limbo over to the sink to clean yourself up.

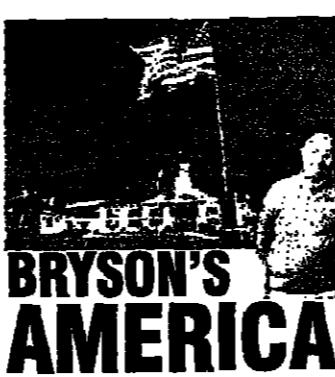
So I accompanied her to the supermarket and while she was off squeezing melons and pricing shiitake (Japanese oak log) mushrooms, I made for the junk

food section - which was essentially all the rest of the store. Well, it was heaven.

The breakfast cereals alone could have occupied me for most of the afternoon. There must have been 200 types, and I am not exaggerating. Every possible substance that could be dried, puffed and sugar coated was there. The most immediately arresting was Cookie Crisp, which tried to pretend it was a nutritious breakfast but was really just chocolate chip cookies that you put in a bowl and ate with milk. Brilliant!

Also of note were cereals called Peanut Butter Crunch, Cinnamon Mini Buns, Count Chocula ("with Monster Marshmallows"), and a particularly hardcore offering called Cookie Blast Oat Meal, which contained four kinds of cookies. I grabbed one of each of the cereals and two of the oatmeal - how often I've said that you shouldn't start a day without a big steaming bowl of cookies - and sprinted with them back to the trolley.

"What's that?" my wife asked



in the special tone of voice with which she often addresses me in retail establishments.

I didn't have time to explain. "Breakfast for the next six months," I painted as I dashed past. "And don't even think about putting any of it back and getting me!"

I had no idea how the market for junk food had proliferated. Everywhere I turned I was confronted with foods guaranteed to make you waddle, most of which were entirely new to me - jelly cream pies, moon pies, pecan spinwheels, peach mellos,

root beer buttons, chocolate fudge devil dogs and a whipped marshmallow sandwich spread called Fluff, which came in a tub large enough to bathe a baby in.

You really cannot believe the bountiful variety of non-nutritious foods available to the American supermarket shopper these days or the quantities in which they are consumed. I recently read that the average American eats 17.8 lbs of pretzels every year.

Aisle seven ("Food for the Seriously Obese") was especially productive. It had a whole section devoted exclusively to a product called Toaster Pastries, which included among much else, eight different types of toaster strudel.

And what exactly is toaster strudel? Who cares? It was coated in sugar and looked drippy. I grabbed an armload. I admit I got a little carried away - but there was so much, and I had been away so long.

It was the breakfast pizza that finally made my wife snap. She looked at the box and said: "No!"

"I beg your pardon, my sweet?"

"You are not bringing home

something called breakfast pizza. I will let you have it" - she reached into the trolley for some specimen samples - "root beer buttons and toaster strudel and..." She lifted out a packet that she hadn't noticed before. "What's this?"

I looked over her shoulder.

"Microwave pancakes," I said.

"Microwave pancakes!" she repeated, but with less enthusiasm.

"Isn't science wonderful?"

"You're going to eat it all," she went on. "Every bit of everything that you don't put back on the shelves now. You do understand that, don't you?"

"Of course," I said in my sincerest voice.

And do you know she actually made me eat it. I spent weeks

working my way through a

symphony of American junk food,

and it was all awful. Every bit of

it. I don't know whether

American junk food has got

worse, or whether my taste buds

have matured, but even the

treats I'd grown up with now

seemed discouragingly pallid or

disgustingly sickly.

Extracted from 'Notes from a Big Country'. Doubleday, £16.99. From all major book shops or by mail order from 01624 675137.

A very independent traveller



Sarah with her daughter, Hannah: 'I wasn't afraid for her - not ever'

Philip Meech

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Last year, when most 16-year-olds were quarrelling with their parents about staying out at night, Hannah Chapman was travelling Europe, alone, armed only with a round-Europe rail ticket, a BT card and nearly £200. She's now back in London, working for her A-levels. Her mother Sarah and step-father Bill paid for the ticket, but the bigger gift was their trust.

Sarah

She felt so limited by school, by us, by her little North London world. She was so angry that there were times when, frankly, the thought of Hannah going away seemed wonderful. When she said, almost as a threat, that she wanted to travel, we said: "Yes, just do it." Before I bought the ticket I had to come to terms with the fact that she would be alone, that dreadful things could happen to her, but that you have to take a leap of faith. After all, something dreadful could happen to her in North London - why is it more likely in Europe?

I wasn't afraid for her - not ever. Hannah has always been able to look after herself. When her father and I broke up I think she decided: "No one is ever going to hurt me." She has the strongest sense of self-preservation of anyone that age I know. It would be a brave person who would mess with her. On her fourth birthday she was given a dress. She wore it once and said she would never wear a dress again. She was determined that there was nothing a boy could do that she couldn't do. When she learned to play football she did it well enough to be the first girl, ever, to play for the FA. People ask if I didn't think twice about letting a 16-year-old travel alone across Europe. I say: "Not any 16-year-old, just this one."

Both Bill (her stepfather) and I had travelled alone, which is why we encouraged her to do it. Part of the pleasure is the opportunity to be selfish, to go where you want, when you want. I knew she would meet people with ease and she is used to travelling without plans. On family holidays we never book hotels in advance. We just go.

We had no idea where she was going but she telephoned frequently

and you could tell by her voice that she was excited and engaged and very much alive.

There was one long gap of about eight days. That was the only time I worried. I gave myself a time limit. If she hadn't rung, I suppose I would have had to go to Prague, which is the last place she phoned from, and try to trace her. But then she phoned and on impulse we thought it would be nice to meet her in Calais. When we got there we discovered that she had been arrested in Berlin and missed the train. She was on her way to Amsterdam. So we drove there. Hannah just wandered up and said "hello" as though it was as normal as could be that we should be there to meet her.

I don't know how much she has told me about her journey and I don't know if I want to know. She has survived. That is enough.

Hannah

We didn't discuss it and I didn't plan it. I left thinking: "Everything is unknown, I'll just see what happens next." After three days in Amsterdam with friends I headed for Switzerland, arriving at the border about 9.30pm. It looked like a big town but everything was closed so I went back to the station.

I was walking past this zoo and I could see the light reflecting off the animals' eyes. There was no sound and I could feel the hairs rise on the back of my neck. I thought: "God I'm by myself." So I phoned home and then took a train which stopped in Basle at 3am where I sat on a bench for the rest of the night chatting with this guy. That was my first night alone. It was a bit overwhelming.

I wanted to pack in as much as I could, so sometimes I went without "just go".

sleep for three days, then I would sleep on the train or in a park. It was strange. You are there by yourself. Nowhere to stay, no one to know, you don't know the place, everything is down to you: good or bad. You are in complete control. There was an overpowering sense of freedom. I loved it. I had no responsibility to be anyone but myself.

There were times when I felt intimidated. Like when I was with some Albanians in a park and a man came over and said to me, in English: "I think you should get out of here. Don't follow me, but leave as soon as you can." Or when I got flashed on the train, or at 3am in Milan when I had to walk to the station past prostitutes sitting on the tops of cars, or when I got arrested in Berlin.

But I went into things with an open, positive attitude. I expected to get the same back and I did. I think being young was a protection in a way. People wanted to show me everything, they cooked me meals, they took me out. And the relationships you make are so intimate. You become best friends for a night - the best nights of your life - and then you move on.

You have to keep your eyes open but you can tell in the first 10 minutes if someone is seriously dodgy. The choices you make affect you so you have to be strong with yourself and if things get dodgy, run! As long as you are confident, and able to communicate, you're made.

When I arrived back in Amsterdam I dumped my bag, went to a cafe and rang home. When I heard they were waiting for me, I gave my joint to someone and hopped and skipped to the station. Man, I had the roughest time I've ever had - it was fantastic. I am so grateful to my parents. I'm so glad that they said "just go".

Poems, broken glass lay the ghost of pain

AMBER ... THAT'S not her real name. It's the name my daughter chose when we were both interviewed by a national paper. The subject was the poetry I wrote about her teenage years of illness, a sort of love affair with dying in the form of anorexia.

It had seemed natural to write them at the time - not poems, but jottings in a private notebook, small splinters of anger and pain. I'm a writer, writing is the way I trust myself to think best. As she pulled out of that first crisis I read through the notes and saw they could be poems. Maybe that way it would make sense. We'd sit in waiting rooms with other families in the same confusion, and tried to talk about the weather. Put an adolescent's problem to a family and everyone starts asking who to blame. Parents look at themselves - and each other - and the question is there. I couldn't speak for other families, but maybe putting it in print, one father's view, would help others speak out in their way.

I checked the poems with my daughter. Yes, she said, go ahead: that's an accurate record, disturbing but true. When I've read them in public, there has always been someone who comes up afterwards. Often it's not anorexia that has touched their family, but some other problem or addiction. What they recognise is the moment when you look into the eyes of the child you

thought you knew better than anyone else in the world, and something else looks out.

I think of the siege scenario: the hostage appears at a window, mouting words that don't sound like their own, in a flat voice, and you have to guess there's someone just behind them with a gun. You can call in the marksmen, you can argue, rage or cry, and the child might suffer, but the illness, the obsession or addiction, will look back at you with a fixed, unblinking eye.

So there she was: Amber, for her own protection. It was her life and people had questions to ask, quite rightly: what I was doing with it? I couldn't speak for her. Did she want to speak for herself? Yes, cautiously, she did. She had a new life now, as a student in another city. Could we do it without having her face or name exposed? In one photograph she appeared with back to camera at a window.

How had we got here? As a poet, you expect to be answerable to a handful of people committed to reading slowly, more than once, weighing each word for what's in it. Then I had a phone call saying that my

book, *The Wasting Game*, had been shortlisted for the Whitbread Prize, and there were people from the press and the radio asking for interviews.

It was the anorexia poems that they wanted to talk about. The book contains other things, four years of a life with a first visit to my father's birthplace, Estonia, and the delicate negotiations of a love affair. I wanted the book to be judged on all of it - evidence that poetry isn't just a word game, that it can help us live our lives, that it's some use. But the title sequence was the part, I knew, that might be news.

Later, reading our words in print and hearing ourselves on the radio was like looking into a mirror. Yes, that's us, but ... We had been sensitively handled. It wasn't a distorting mirror - not like the mirrors which menace an anorexic's life, showing her something horrible and bloated. (Never, never think that it's to do with vanity.) Nor was it the equally distorted mirror of the advert and the TV screen which tells girls what they should look like. No, it was us, but even an accurate reflection

is something slightly other. Thankfully.

So she became Amber. Like a good novel, we could be true but not utterly factual. Because there's no such girl as Amber. I can confess a small crime that says something for our family, something not in the book. Years on, we were driving on the motorway and we glimpsed the tower of the hospital where she spent some dreadful time. One day, she said, I should go back. We looked at each other. Why not now?

At the gate was barbed wire inside a demolition site. We trespassed into empty wards where every weekend visit had been news of someone's running away or suicide attempt or self-harm. It all came back: the awful unyieldingness of it. I had never known that something could be terrifying, and yet tedious at the same time.

Faced with those devious, stubborn and deadly obsessions, day in, day out, the system and the staff had to become as dogged as the illness itself. We had to try to imagine that our daughter's free spirit still existed and was not quite crushed. It did, but it was hard to trust it then.



Philip Gross Christopher Jones

family had been diagnosed from behind the two-way mirror, and there was a leap in my heart when I saw what someone had already done. The mirror, thick plate glass, was cracked from side to side.

It makes little difference that we broke two more panes. It was an exorcism, not as precise as a poem, maybe, but ... What stopped my breath was when my daughter took a felt pen and signed her piece of damage with her own name. Not "Amber", though that's the one we'll use, for this: "I'm fat, look fat..."

Yes and the moon's made of cheese, that chunk she won't touch in the fridge dried, creniced, sweating in its cold like someone with a killing fever. Half a scrape-of-Marmite sandwich, last night's pushed aside, potatoes greying like a tramp's teeth, crusts, crumbs are a danger to her, so much orbiting space junk, that's weightless for only so long. Burn it up on re-rent, burn it, burn it. So she trains with weights, she jogs, she runs as if the sky were falling.

The Wasting Game by Philip Gross. Bloodaxe Books. £6.99.

Quick step the bright side of

Triumphs amid the disasters

THE YEAR IN TELEVISION

GERARD GILBERT

They were triumphant
Delia Smith, Carol Smillie, Jeremy Clarkson, Caroline Aherne, Dame Thora Hird

They were not
Chris Evans, Professor Robert Winston, Ainsley Harriott, Pauline Quirke...

Pauline Quirke?
The Birds of a Feather sitcom actress, boosted no doubt by critical raves for her role in *The Sculptress*, tried "doing a David Jason" and crossing over into a BBC1 police drama, *Maisie Raine*.

Not good?
Not unless you like people who go round shouting all the time.

Other dramas that disappointed
Marks and Gran's too-linear life of Oswald Mosley, as well as Frank Deasy's look at the explosion of hard drugs in 1980s Edinburgh, *Looking after Jo Jo*, which marked the return to the small screen of John MacKenzie, the director of *The Long Good Friday*. The similarities with that 1979 Bob Hoskins movie were a little too marked perhaps, and this was also over-familiar terrain for Robert Carlyle. *Vanity Fair* was more interesting, capturing Thackeray's satirical tone with fantastic design work and brave casting. You didn't hear people talking about it at work the next day, though.

The best dramas
The other big costume drama of the year, *Our Mutual Friend*, was another well-designed film, which managed to rise above the clichéd use of natural light (the impression of dust-laden everything was particularly well conveyed). After Christine

Edzard's *Little Dorrit*, this was the most convincing portrayal yet of Dickens's world. *Anza Friel* looked very pretty in a corseted dress, but not as lovely as Aisling O'Sullivan in the year's best all-round cosmic drama, *The American*. Michael Hastings's adaptation of the Henry James novel, starring O'Sullivan, Diana Rigg and Matthew Modine, transcended its style to involve the viewer with the lives of its characters.

As did Adrian Hodges's adaptation of John McGahern's *Amongst Women*, with a great performance from Tony Doyle as the strict Irish widower. The bravest of Alan Bennett's new round of *Talking Heads* involved David Haig as a paedophile. The best had Dame Thora Hird as a nonagenarian war widow recalling her dead husband.

Not so modern horrors
Two big-budget dramas tried to make us take seriously an alien invasion (*Invasion: Earth*) and vampires (*Ultraviolet*). The latter was Jed Mercurio's sophomore project after writing for *This Life*. *Brothers and Sisters*, about the lives of a gospel choir community in the north of England, was every bit as good as *This Life*, but I don't recall one word of criticism spoken for or against it in any television review. Perhaps it only pays to reflect the lives of metropolitan media types.

Who needs dramas when you've got real people?

The flood of docu-soaps came, as was expected. *The Cruise*, *Superstore*, *Pleasure Beach*, *Airtime*, *Clampers*, *Zoo Keepers* and *Health Farm* were just some of the better of them. Heck, someone even made one about *The Independent* – a

salutary lesson to us Canary Wharfers on the distorting power of the docu-soap genre.

Programmes from Hell

Nannies, Christmases, neighbours, weddings, builders and divorces were all from hell. Andy Hamilton entitled his *Huw Wheldon Memorial Lecture* on the pitfalls of "real people" television, "Brain Surgeons from Hell".

It's funny?
One of the greatest reasons to be cheerful about television in 1998 was that the British sitcom showed some signs of emerging from the purgatory of attempting to emulate *Fawlty Towers* (John Sullivan's *Heartburn Hotel* showed that not everybody had shaken off the habit). First we had to wave off some dinosaurs, in particular *Drop the Dead Donkey*, which re-emerged for a final series in a shower of self-congratulation. *Father Ted* ended for different reasons, although this was always going to be the last series despite Dermot Morgan's untimely death.

Promising newcomers were *How Do You Want Me*, with Dylan Moran bringing some much-needed comic timing to a comedy of townie folk drift in the country. *Men Behaving Badly* (Simon Nye wrote this, as well as the mirth-free *Is It Legal?*, which only goes to illustrate the some gloriously unpredictable of the British one-man-and-a-typewriter approach to sitcom writing.

The American team-writers gave us *Amy McBeal* in a straight (as it were) swap for the fast-disappearing *Ellen*, who came out and lost out. The refreshingly different *The Royle Family* took a somewhat Beckett-like approach to stu-

ation (Northern family sits around watching TV, scratching their backsides) and concentrated on the comedy. *Big Train*, from *Father Ted's* Graham Lineham and Arthur Matthews, promised much, but didn't know whether it wanted to be *Monty Python* or *The Fast Show*. You can't be both.

Just because you're well drawn doesn't mean you're funny
The malaise of the recent British sitcom spread to the emerging British animation scene. *Stressed Eric* and *Rez the Runt* were both superb animations which were badly

undermined by weak scripts. One would be mightily peeved having spent months painstakingly manipulating Plasticine if one discovered that the writers hadn't taken a quarter the trouble.

You're famous. Here's a TV programme

Janet Street-Porter walked from Kent to Wales in *Coast to Coast*. Perhaps the BBC wanted her out of the office.

Jools Holland's Beat Route

"here I am driving through a city I don't know much about"

wasn't much of an improvement, though it did have better music. In *Tee Time*, Chris

Evans toured the world playing golf. He ain't stupid.

Other bad ideas

If I Ruled the World (debating

society exercise that would

struggle on Radio 4); *Food*

Fight (comedy quiz about food

– this year's winner of the Tibs

and Fibs prize for desperation); *Bobes in the Wood*, the return

of *Miss World* (and much else on Channel 5); and *Jo Whiley*. If God had meant pop stars to talk, he would have made them all Leonard Cohen.

Now everyone's a chat show host

Just to show up Ian Wright.

Johnny Vaughan, Jeremy Clarkson and the year's other chat show upstarts. Michael Parkinson made a comeback last January. Unfortunately, he started by interviewing David Attenborough, Billy Connolly and other, well, not exactly cutting-edge types. His interview with George Michael pointed to better things to come. His next guest is Geri Halliwell, apparently, who seems to follow George Michael everywhere these days. The most frightening interview of the year was Ruby Wax with OJ Simpson. If you didn't think the man was guilty before, you sure did now.

THIS WAS THE WEEK THAT WAS

Today On this day in 1895 the first film comedy was premiered, a rib-tickling short about a gardener who is tricked, by a jester, into wetting himself. The lead part was played by the actual family gardener (typecast again) of the Lumière brothers.

Tomorrow In 1972 passengers from a plane which had crashed in the Andes were rescued, having survived by cannibalism; the 1993 fictionalised film of their ordeal, *Alive*, was almost as tasteless.

Wednesday In 1672 the first public concert was held "in a nasty hole" in central London, where a former royal musician, who had been sacked for being cheeky to the king, organised "very good musick". The performers were separated by a curtain from the eating, drinking and smoking audience, who might have put the musicians off their notes.

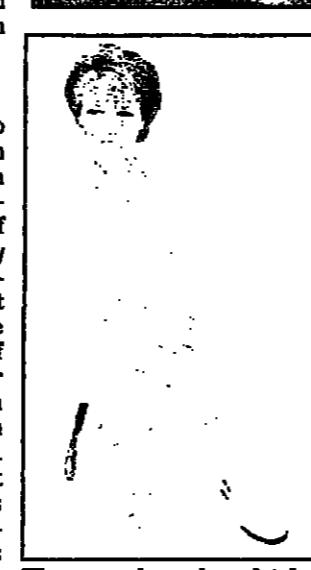
Thursday Henri Matisse was born in 1869; he became the leader of Fauvism, the group of painters so called after being denounced as *Les Fauves* (wild animals) on the grounds that, being fully paid-up Bohemians, they didn't brush their hair much.

Friday The British Board of Film Censors started in 1913. Of the year's 7,510 movies, most were given U certificates, with a few receiving As, while 22 were banned for suggestiveness, ridicule or drunkenness or "abhorrent" native customs. In 1962 The Beatles auditioned for the Decca record label but were advised not to give up their day jobs.

Saturday The Royal Academy opened in 1769; the sound you heard last year was Sir Joshua Reynolds, its first president, turning in his grave at the sawn-up cow and child-molester-style figures in Saachi's "Sensation" exhibition.

Sunday The first prison film show was held in a New South Wales nick in 1911; movies of "an elevating nature" included the New Wave epic *Waterways of Holland* and the canine cinema *petite* classic *Dogs of Various Countries*.

JONATHAN SALE



Those we have loved (clockwise from top): 'Vanity Fair', 'The Royle Family' and Delia Smith

Quick steps to the brighter side of life

DANCE

DANCE NIGHT

BBC2. TONIGHT

You would have to be mad to watch the whole of this evening's *Dance Night* on BBC2 from start to finish. But you would be crazy to miss it altogether. The opportunity to be instructed in the waltz, jive and salsa by that big fat show-off Alexei Sayle (no, that's his own description, not mine) is too funny to miss. Will he manage to convince the Great British Public that "dancing is beautiful. It'll make you live longer, be nicer, stand taller, smile brighter, and think more interesting thoughts". Well, I know it's true but I'm biased.

His partner for the evening is the ballet dancer Deborah Bull, and she certainly has some interesting thoughts, even if they are not always convincing. Anyone would have to admit that it is a little bizarre to hear her claiming that the choreographer Kenneth MacMillan introduced realism into ballet, while the camera shows her in one of his works, held upside down, high above the gloriously Adam Cooper's head during what is supposed to be a wild seduction scene. We know about the *Karma Sutra*, but this is going too far.

Bull and Sayle are the hosts for the whole show, starting at 6.00 and going on until 1.50 tomorrow, and besides their nine highly varied main items they introduce some short archive films (from *Torville and Dean's Bolero* to *Best Ballroom*) plus assorted celebrities from many fields telling about "my first dance lesson". Two feature films offer solid entertainment, and even if you feel like me, *A Chorus Line* lost a lot on being transferred from stage to screen, the Australian comedy *Strictly Ballroom* never miss-



The canny, hilarious comedy 'Strictly Ballroom'

a formal garden – but the child really does it.

Siobhan Davies's *The Art of Touch* is something else again – one of the best works of the best living British choreographer, excitingly danced by the excellent dancers she made it for; inspired by Scarlatti's keyboard sonatas and a modern supplement for harpsichord by Matteo Fargion. Look how wonderfully it is filmed, too, under Ross MacGibbon's direction: this must be the best thing that sometimes infuriating chap (remember his daft Nureyev documentary?) has done.

Davies's work is not everybody's cup of tea, but those who like it will love it. Others may go for *Clubbing*, Marcus Rymer's film about young people who live only for the night when they can dress up, make up, finesse their way ahead of the queue, get high on drink or

drugs, and dance the night away. Desperately they try to explain just what the appeal is, and if you don't understand, it's not for you (or me, thanks).

Any complaints? Frankly, yes; the evening tries to be too many things to too many people, and will leave each section of the audience wanting more of the kinds of dance they like, at the expense of the rest.

But it is worth a cheer or two that dear old Auntie Beeb has finally woken up to what good entertainment dance can be, and maybe we can hope they will in future squeeze just a little more of it, more regularly, into their programmes.

Meanwhile, enjoy: there must be something here that anyone can like, if only at the risk of living longer, standing taller and thinking more interesting thoughts.

JOHN PERCIVAL

A sumptuous tale with an extra twist

ROYAL OPERA

THE GOLDEN COCKEREL

SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE

LONDON



The mad Tsar Dodon

IT'S IN the stars. In sleep. In dreams. Night skies, night sweats, magic and mayhem, babushka dolls containing nasty surprises, birds of paradise and prey – and beds, lots of beds. These are the recurring images of Tim Hopkins's compelling new Royal Opera production of Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Golden Cockerel*. In its day, the opera – the composer's last – was considered subversive. Pushkin, on whose satirical poem it was based, fell out of favour with Tsar Nicholas I. Nicholas II's censors suppressed the work. Hopkins shows us why. And then he shows us how. He plucks away at its beautiful plumage, he resists the ravishment, the eastern promise of Rimsky's bewitched score, he inhabits its shadows, he dwells on the grubby truths which underscore the fairy tale, he looks to the dark side of the moon and stars.

Enter then, the astrologer-story-teller, fortune-teller, sometime magician. Actually, when we first discover him, he and his beautiful assistant are in bed. As we later learn, they alone are the flesh and blood of this unsettling entertainment.

Everything and everybody else is of their making, figments of their imagination and ours. Not surprisingly – but ingeniously – she turns out to be the beautiful Queen of Shemakhan who will be Tsar Dodon's undoing.

And so the diary of a madman – Tsar Dodon – is now under way. He who would sleepwalk his way through responsibility, who would sacrifice his own sons to superstition and whim, whose dreams, whose delusions are all on celluloid – like movies in his mind re-run nightly (by our friend the astrologer, of course) – is a ludicrously territorial figure of fun. The fool who would be king. He and his court look and behave – in Anthony Baker's striking black and white designs – like the Eisenstein cartoon that never was. Succumbing to the counterfeited charms of his queen-to-be, Hopkins has the booming bass of Paata Burchuladze singing and dancing like Boris Yeltsin on the night of his election. We can no longer hide behind the fantasy.

With the triumphant procession of Dodon and his new bride, Hopkins mounts a kind

of fantastical May Day parade, a chronicle of Russian propaganda, from framed photographs of her imperial past to representatives of industry and the military bearing models of their hardware, and climaxing with a space-walking cosmonaut. The opposition there of Rimsky's brazenly upbeat triumphalism and the weightless slow-motion and spotless white of the cosmonaut made for a thrilling theatricality.

Vladimir Jurovski (moved up from later performances to substitute for Gennadi Rozhdestvensky) duly took this as his moment to unrein the Royal Opera Orchestra. His was an unusually subtle and supple response to a score whose fragrance and refugency can so easily detract from its underlying remorsefulness. Beneath all that luminous melodic and harmonic filigree, a quasi-frenzy pervades. The Astrologer sets the tone with his strange, distracted otherworldly falsetto. Jean-Paul Fouche court caught the vocal ambiguity beautifully. As did the shapey Elena Kelessidze, suddenly, startlingly reborn as the Queen of Shemakhan, her "languid airs" festooned in shimmering coloratura to match the spotlit gold of her attire. The mysterious cockerel in female form. The bird of paradise. Apologies were given on her behalf for a viral infection, but you would never have known it. Musically and dramatically, this was an accomplished evening.

As the final words of text came home to roost, so to speak, Hopkins, one felt, had nailed the subtext. "What will the new dawn bring?" asked the chorus, receding once more into the snowy darkness. "Emptiness," came the reply. Small wonder Tsar Nicholas II was not enamoured.

EDWARD SECKERSON

"DELICIOUS"

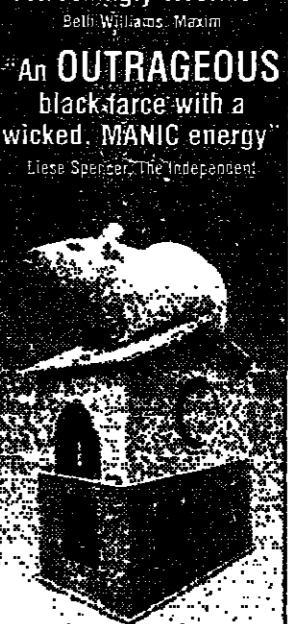
Dame Smith, *Attitude*

"WONDERFULLY mischievous and refreshingly WICKED"

Bell Williams, *Maxim*

"OUTRAGEOUS black farce with a wicked MANIC energy"

Liesl Spencer, *The Independent*



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NETWORK

A year is a long time in cyberspace

From Microsoft's legal battles to the development of online shopping, 1998 has seen major developments in information technology. By Andy Oldfield

Microsoft started 1998 considering a preliminary injunction granted by US District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson, prohibiting it from tying its Internet Explorer (IE) browser to the Windows 95 operating system. The company maintained that it was impossible to separate the browser and the operating system, so to comply with the injunction it proposed offering for sale an older version of Windows or a non-functional one. The US Department of Justice (DOJ) filed a claim for contempt asking that Microsoft be fined \$1m a day until it complied fully with the injunction. The matter was resolved when Microsoft agreed to let manufacturers delete the IE icon from the Windows desktop.

For the US government's anti-trust case into whether Microsoft had used illegal business practices to violate a 1995 consent decree, Judge Jackson appointed a "special master", Professor Lawrence Lessig, to collect evidence and propose a legal outcome. Microsoft objected to the appointment, saying that Lessig was demonstrably biased against the software company. In February, an appeals court suspended Lessig and the DOJ said that it was examining the possibility of filing fresh anti-trust charges against Microsoft.

In March, the DOJ confirmed that it was widening the scope of its investigations to include issues related to Sun Microsystems and the Java programming language. Microsoft's sales did not suffer. In March, the company joined the elite "market cap" club, passing the £200bn market value level.

As the year progressed, both the DOJ and Microsoft made extensive use of the media to try and bolster their own cases. Microsoft's contention that the government was impeding its ability to innovate received some support when an appeal court overturned Judge Jackson's preliminary injunction and criticised the timing and rationale of the DOJ's case and its interpretation of the 1995 consent decree.

In May, the DOJ was joined by 13 states which were also considering filing anti-trust lawsuits. Eventually a coalition of 20 states and the DOJ filed suits and Judge Jackson agreed to combine the complaints. A date of 8 September was set for the trial. As details of public access to pre-trial witness examinations was worked out, the trial date slipped to 22 September and then to 15 October and finally to 19 October. Proceedings were often low-key as

expert witnesses presented their testimony on matters such as the degree of integration between IE and Windows, and relationships between Microsoft and other companies such as Netscape Communications, Apple and Intel. Videotape of Bill Gates being less than co-operative in his deposition to the DOJ provided some light relief. By the end of November, AOL's proposed \$4.2bn buyout of Netscape and a co-operative deal with Sun was announced. Earlier this month, Judge Jackson said it could "have an immediate effect on the definition of the market as we are contemplating it here".

By mid-December, one of the states dropped out of the case. South Carolina Attorney General Charles Condon said he felt that Microsoft was no longer harming competition in the hi-tech industry. "The merger of AOL with Netscape... proves that the forces of competition are working," he said. "Further government intervention or regulation is unnecessary and, in my judgement, unwise."

Findings released in January by Positive Support reviews suggested that Microsoft's browser had overtaken Netscape's in usage, but commentators were unsure of the methodology employed. More conventional studies, according to ZD Market Intelligence, showed that by June the number of PCs using

Videotape of Bill Gates being less than co-operative in his deposition to the Microsoft trial provided light relief

Netscape had fallen from 63 per cent last year to 54 per cent, with IE doubling from 21 per cent to 39 per cent. A month later an AdKnowledge survey put the figures at 52.2 per cent and 45.6 per cent respectively. IDC reported that by October, Netscape had lost its market lead with 41.5 per cent compared to IE's 43.8 per cent.

In April, Netscape fulfilled an earlier promise to make the code of its software open source, encouraging a wide community of developers to download the code for free and improve upon it. Netscape said that despite its proposed acquisition by AOL in November, work carried out by Mozilla.org, the independent open-source project set-up by Netscape to develop new features and

e-mails using the infrared system on your newly acquired Nokia mobile phone and impress all your relatives with the magic of wireless communications. With all these new tricks we learned in 1998, is there anything left to discover in 1999?

You will be pleased to know that there will be plenty of new gizmos coming our way, and some of them may even turn out to be useful. My money is on a boom in hardware driven by new hand-held devices, and particularly those that can keep us entertained while waiting for the night bus in Trafalgar Square. The Son-of-the-Palm-Pilot-and-Game-Boy will be born anytime now, so you will be able to find the number for your local minicab and play a quick game while you are waiting for it to turn up. Personal digital assistants are merging not only with mobile phones but also with pagers, Walkmans, Minidiscs

players and even watches. This trend towards combining personal organisers and entertainment will produce many new multifunctional gizmos that can be held in the palm of your hand. This is also driving developments in wireless connectivity, where everything has an infrared connection to other gizmos. True portability is just round the corner, freeing us forever from the narrow confines of the office.

However, the biggest developments in 1999 will be driven by that most urgent of human desires - the Need for Speed. I feel this need is beginning to affect my normally rational behaviour. Recently, I've started to contemplate moving to an area that provides cable modems. Migration patterns of the population following bandwidth availability have already been noted in leafy Hampstead. This quiet suburban



Bill Gates was at the centre of attention for most of the year, thanks to the anti-trust case brought against Microsoft. Reuters



Enjoying a good year: Jerry Yang of Yahoo! (left) and Steve Jobs of Apple. Reuters



protected online distribution of music. A similar initiative was announced this month by the RIAA, the major record labels, and leading technology companies.

The 25 June release date for Windows 98 did not slip. An update, rather than a new operating system, Microsoft said it was the final incarnation of DOS-based operating systems. The release was low-key compared with the launch of Windows 95, but 17 PC World stores opened at midnight in the UK and sold 1,081 units in one hour of trading. Within a month, one million upgrade units had been sold. The first update was posted on Microsoft's website in August, but the company claimed that it was for multimedia enhancements, rather than a bug fix.

In a year where all players in the portal website market were making deals and strategic alliances, Yahoo! maintained its position as market leader. In July, Yahoo! co-founders Jerry Yang and David Filo became billionaires when stock prices closed in on \$200 per share. By October, the company had tripled its turnover with profits of \$16.7m on net revenue of \$53.6m for its third quarter, compared with \$18.1m in the previous quarter.

September saw the launch of Freeserve - a subscription-free Internet service provider backed by Dixons and Energis. The intention was to increase Net traffic and open up the potential for electronic commerce. Although technical support was charged at £1 per minute, by last month the service had established itself as the UK's second-largest ISP with 475,000 users, close behind the UK's largest, AOL, with 500,000 paying users.

selling out on the first day. Although it was on sale for only 17 days in August, it was the second best-selling system that month, accounting for 7.1 per cent of all sales. Almost 13 per cent of iMacs sold were to people replacing Windows PCs. In September, the iMac launched in Europe. A new version of the Macintosh operating system, Mac OS 8.5, also shipped. By October, Jobs was able to report profits for four successive quarters.

Amazon.com, the online bookstore that has made \$2bn for its founder, Jeff Bezos, took its first steps into Europe in May with deals worth \$50m to buy the UK online bookseller Bookpages, the German

Internet bookshop Telebook and the Internet Movie Database. In June, it expanded into music sales, offering discounts of 10 to 40 per cent off retail prices. Even though the company has yet to show a profit in the "investment cycle" of its development, its share value surpassed when the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), citing fears of piracy, won a temporary injunction prohibiting Diamond from marketing its Rio music player, a Walkman-like device that plays music downloaded from the Net. The injunction was overturned last month.

In November, Iomega and Liquid Audio announced plans to work on technology to enable copyright-protected online distribution of music. A similar initiative was announced this month by the RIAA, the major record labels, and leading technology companies.

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What changes will 1999 bring to your online life?

THE INTERNET changed our daily routines beyond all recognition in 1998. For the first time, many of us logged on and shopped for our Christmas presents online. You have sent your share of Christmas e-cards featuring South Park cartoons. You have probably been on the receiving end of at least a few of those killer attachments (and filtered out for ever the over-enthusiastic senders who clog up your in-box with animated bursts of Flash creativity).

You have watched Paul McCartney cooking live on www.broadcast.com, and even downloaded Linda's recipes from the website, since she seemed to be the only person on Earth who could make mung beans look tasty. Finally, you dragged your new, wafer-thin Viao laptop to your mother-in-law's for Christmas dinner. Now you can play new scenarios for Civilisation II and pick up your

players and even watches. This trend towards combining personal organisers and entertainment will produce many new multifunctional gizmos that can be held in the palm of your hand. This is also driving developments in wireless connectivity, where everything has an infrared connection to other gizmos. True portability is just round the corner, freeing us forever from the narrow confines of the office.

However, the biggest developments in 1999 will be driven by that most urgent of human desires - the Need for Speed. I feel this need is beginning to affect my normally rational behaviour. Recently, I've started to contemplate moving to an area that provides cable modems. Migration patterns of the population following bandwidth availability have already been noted in leafy Hampstead. This quiet suburban



EVA PASCOE
The year's biggest changes will be driven by that most urgent of human desires - the Need for Speed

backwater has suddenly shot to fame, with the claim of being the first area in London where you can obtain an ADSL connection. Plugging this beauty into your

PC means sudden elevation to a higher level of the wired experience. A mere 56K mortal will feel like she or he has never surfed the Net before. Suddenly, online shopping takes two minutes instead of 10, video streams flow off the pipe in a pleasing, jerk-free fluidity and online radio becomes a viable alternative to Kiss FM.

The rollout of ADSL will also bring demands for more video on websites, and with rapidly decreasing costs of desktop video editing, more programmes will appear on topics not related to gardening, motoring or Delta Smith, and that is something I can't wait to see. I gave up on terrestrial television a long time ago, but still lurk at CNN and SkyNews. Now with ZDNet putting a new show online every day, I hope that my channel-surfing days are well and truly over. I predict 1999 will also be a big year for satellite Internet

connections, with football clubs cooking up new video-Web programmes that will not be available to the non-satellite Internet users.

I also expect online banking will take off next year, as the well-known British pastime of spending lunch hour queuing at the bank simply to pay the gas bill falls somewhat short of the desirable 21st-century banking experience. If my bank doesn't get its act together pretty soon, I will follow its CEO and move to an American competitor that understands my lifestyle and online payment systems. Bill Gates has been making noises about starting an online bank, and despite various misgivings about his style of software development, I would sign up as his e-wallet proposition is a lot more innovative than anything Barclays or Lloyds have yet to come up with.

Finally, I hope that 1999 will

also be the year when I will receive an e-mail response from my local MP. Even if it's an automatic acknowledgement, I will frame it, cherish it and hang it above my bed, thankful for the pleasure of living in the era where the Government understands that its function is customer service. Complaints departments will have to answer in 24 hours and deal with the matter within a day or I shall withdraw my taxes. If it wasn't for the incomprehensible lack of progress of the Inland Revenue's own online efforts, I could even be withdrawing my taxes electronically.

All in all, there's sure to be plenty of entertainment to look forward to in 1999, that is if Y2K doesn't muck up our computer-based society well in advance of the Big Day. Meanwhile, I wish you a year full of technological adventures - and a cable modem. eva@never.com

Which way Web sales?

WEB DESIGN



JASON
CRANFORD
TEAGUE

IN CASE you it escaped your attention, last week was Christmas. And the high street is not the only place that has benefited from gift-giving. The Web has posted record sales as more and more busy people went online to play Santa.

For sites selling products and services, the audience is no longer visitors surfing the web, (<http://www.independent.co.uk/et/380810ne/story5.html>). Instead, they have become consumers. There are two sides to the consumer coin: marketing and selling.

Selling seems to be doing quite well, as evidenced by the online star, Amazon.com, whose stock has soared to over \$300. It is Web marketing - convincing a person to buy - that's struggling.

Traditionally, marketing to the masses has been based on a passive model through print, television and radio ads. These require no immediate action by consumers, but instead they receive ads intended to influence or change their buying habits. There is some differentiation of ads for different audiences, but generally, ads are intended to appeal to as broad a segment of the population as possible.

The Web is supposed to be different: It is about the two-way transfer of information, and is an active medium where a website visitor is expected to interact with the content. The Web has indeed strengthened the voice of special interest groups, each with its own needs, concerns and desires.

Unfortunately, marketing on the Web became stuck early on with the generic banner ad. These are really nothing more than a concept borrowed from the world of print. They are general long graphics that span the top of the screen, often animated, and used just like print ads to capture the viewer's interest. Banner ads are also hyperlinked to further information which viewers will

"click-through", but often what the visitor finds at the other end is another idea borrowed from the print world - the brochure website: these simply present static information, just like a printed brochure.

How effective are banner ads and brochure sites? One school of thought is that if they didn't work they would not have endured. Yet they are little better than their counterparts in older media at engaging web users in active participation.

In other media, the value of an advertisement is based on the number of people seeing that advertisement. For most media this is scientifically calculated using careful measurements of circulation or the number of televisions or radios tuned in. But, you can throw these notions out of the window when it comes to measuring how many people see a banner ad on the Web, especially since the click-through rate is far more important than the number of eyeballs laid upon it.

Services, such as NetRatings and MediaMetric, attempt to measure the number of visitors and how often they click on ads. Yet these services often provide completely different results for the same site. When websites seeking ad revenues they can pick the numbers that paint their site in the best light.

While banner ads definitely generate revenue for a lot of different sites, it is questionable whether they capture customers for the firm paying for the ad. So, is the banner-ad/click-through/brochure-site model how online marketing should be pursued in future?

The Web is still a very young and underdeveloped medium, but one that has come of age in the era of big media with big expectations and highly refined methods, especially in marketing. It still requires testing and experimentation or it is possible that its full potential may never be realised.

So what should our strategy be? What are our other options in online marketing? Simple: Use the Web's strengths.

Unlike other media with limited bandwidth (there is only so much room on newsgroups' shelves or television channels), the web is infinite. You can set up as many sites as you wish and each can be narrowly focused for a specific audience. For about the price of a single TV ad, a firm can set up a website for its targeted audience. But why stop there? Why not target the people who influence the people who buy your product? Websites can be set up with content and functions that appeal to these trend-setters and be sponsored (rather than advertised on) by a company wishing to endear itself to this select audience. The Web may well change the nature of selling as we move from macro-marketing into niche-marketing.

Niche sites may have a small audience, but have the potential directly to reach the people interested in purchasing a particular product or service. They build brand loyalty, and in the future that'll be even more vital than brand recognition.

Send your comments or queries to Jason at indy_webdesign@mindspring.com

MY TECHNOLOGY

Fashion designer Amanda Wakeley on her Motorola StarTAC phone.

Interview by Jennifer Rodger

A mobile makes me far more efficient

It always makes me laugh to see people apparently talking to themselves while sitting in a car using a hands-free mobile device. But you know, - or rather hope - that this is not the case.

I have used mobile phones for quite a long time. I think back to my first mobile, eight years ago, which was like a brick, but heavier than one and with batteries that only lasted two hours. This one (the StarTAC) is relatively new. I got it about a year ago. Because I travel a lot, going to the West End for meetings, for instance. It means I can carry on working in the taxi or car. If you are sitting in traffic you might as well be making phone calls. My day doesn't stop now.

I must say this mobile is brilliant. The only time it doesn't work is when you use it in America, which is a law unto itself. American cellular phones are on completely different systems. But when I was somewhere remote, such as Zanzibar last year, it worked a treat. One thing I don't like about using mobile phones, particularly this one, is that I am not convinced it is at all healthy - what with the reports relating the signals to

cancer. And you can't get one of those earpieces for the StarTAC, which would reduce the worry. Plus, I am not convinced Motorola has got the equipment right. There is a fragility about the design; it can break while you are trying to fold it down. This is my third one.

To be honest, the multitude of mobiles you can now get makes choosing one very confusing. Well, I find it so! In the end, I chose a StarTAC because it has a long battery life, is light and compact. The batteries are so tiny I don't mind carrying them. And I can just turn off my mobile when I don't feel like answering it.

It has an answer phone, so that's fine - it can take the messages. I am not someone who wastes a lot of time on the phone, although I do use it to keep in touch with my friends and family, but it is generally for calls of a business nature or to make arrangements quickly.

Most people I come in contact with in fashion have a mobile. I don't have a secretary and use voicemail instead - both in the office and at home. So this technology means I don't need a receptionist; everyone in my office has their own phone lines and voicemail. You think of an

office with 20 people who are all likely to receive about 40 personal calls per day, which a receptionist would have to sort. I think it's fine that people can now go straight through to the person they want to speak to: it's much more efficient and the concept of someone answering phones just to put you through is outdated.

Efficiency is why new technology appeals to me. Everything is becoming a lot more convenient. I have heard people call it the trend towards cocooning. Doing things such as supermarket shopping on the Internet means we are more likely to stay inside. But I think the convenience of shopping on the PC will never take away the luxurious feeling you can get from touching items, from feeling clothes. However, on the other hand, if you know a brand like ours,

you can assume the feel and quality will be there. Plus the whole idea behind Amanda Wakeley's collaboration with Principles has been to make designer clothes more accessible to a wider audience - perhaps for people who don't live in one of the major cities.

Other than this, I use e-mail a little bit, but it's still a mystery to me. But I am coming round to it. As you can probably tell, I am not a natural tech-nerd - or whatever they call it - but I absolutely love the convenience of it. I just think it's a more competitive world, so we have to be more efficient in our work practices.

Amanda Wakeley designs for Principles are available online at <http://www.principles.co.uk/ama>

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Amanda Wakeley designs for Principles are available online at <http://www.principles.co.uk/ama>

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10/LISTINGS

NEW FILMS

THE APPLE (SIB) (PG)

Director: Samirah Makhmalbaf
Starring: Massoumeh Naderi, Zahra Naderi
Seventeen-year-old Makhmalbaf's precocious début re-creates the true-life fortunes of Iraq's Naderi sisters, raised in seclusion by their parents before being set loose by a social worker. Part docudrama, part rites-of-passage fable, *The Apple* is a luminous missive from a burgeoning Iranian film scene. *West End: Metro, Remar*

ENEMY OF THE STATE (15)

Director: Tony Scott
Starring: Will Smith, Gene Hackman
Will Smith's fall-guy DA teams up with Gene Hackman's pensioned-off Pentagon warhorse in a tale of political intrigue. A top-drawer cast weaves in and out of the hi-tech imagery and adrenalised chase scenes. West End: ABC Tottenham Court Road, Clapham Picture House, Hammersmith Virgin, Notting Hill Coronet, Odeon Camden Town, Odeon Kensington, Odeon Marble Arch, Odeon Swiss Cottage, Odeon West End, Ritzy Cinema, Screen on Baker Street, Screen on the Green, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Chelsea, Virgin Fulham Road

THE MIGHTY (PG)

Director: Peter Chelsom
Starring: Sharon Stone, Gillian Anderson
*Peter Chelsom's *The Mighty* is a stolid and rather predictable tale of two outcast kids in Cincinnati. Sharon Stone and Gillian Anderson cope well in what basically amounts to supporting roles. West End: Barbican Screen, Curzon Soho, Gate Nearing Hill, Richmond Filmhouse, Screen on the Hill, Virgin Fulham Road, Virgin Haymarket*

WHAT DREAMS MAY COME (15)

Director: Vincent Ward
Starring: Robin Williams, Anabella Sciorra
*Along comes Christmas, and out comes *What Dreams May Come*, an over-glazed turkey with all the trimmings. Williams simmers as the dead chapie who leaves a cod-impressionist heaven to rescue his suicide-bride (Sciorra) from a Gothic hell. Metaphysical conceits arrive with a heavy dusting of sugar. West End: ABC Baker Street, ABC Shaftesbury Avenue, Clapham Picture House, Elephant & Castle Coronet, Odeon Camden Town, Odeon Haymarket, Odeon Kensington, Odeon Marble Arch, Odeon Swiss Cottage, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Chelsea, Virgin Trocadero, Warner Village West End*

Xan Brooks

GENERAL RELEASE

ANTZ (PG)

See *The Independent Recommends*, right. West End: Plaza, Ritzy Cinema, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Chelsea, Virgin Trocadero

BABE: PIG IN THE CITY (U)

In the follow-up to *Babe*, knockabout comedy is kept to a minimum in favour of a bleak animalistic fairytale. West End: ABC Baker Street, ABC Tottenham Court Road, Clapham Picture House, Hammersmith Virgin, Odeon Camden Town, Odeon Kensington, Odeon Marble Arch, Odeon Swiss Cottage, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Fulham Road, Virgin Trocadero

THE MASK OF ZORRO (PG)

This swashbuckler gallops full-speed through 19th-century California in the company of Antonio Banderas's Hispanic do-gooder. West End: Clapham Picture House, Elephant & Castle Coronet, Hammersmith Virgin, Odeon Camden Town, Odeon Kensington, Odeon Leicester Square, Odeon Marble Arch, Odeon Swiss Cottage, Ritzy Cinema, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Fulham Road, Virgin Trocadero

MULAN (U)

This has it all: pro-active heroine; strong father/daughter relationship; honour; nobility. It's also one of the most visually innovative movies that Disney has ever made. West End: Odeon, Mezzanine, UCI Whiteleys, Warner Village West End

MY NAME IS JOE (15)

See *The Independent Recommends*, right. West End: ABC Tottenham Court Road, Curzon Soho, Virgin Haymarket

THE NEGOTIATOR (15)

Samuel L Jackson and Kevin Spacey go head to head in this thrilling drama. West End: Odeon Marble Arch, Virgin Fulham Road, Virgin Trocadero, Warner Village West End

OUT OF SIGHT (15)

See *The Independent Recommends*, right. West End: Empire Leicester Square, Odeon Kensington, Odeon Swiss Cottage, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Chelsea, Virgin Trocadero

THE PARENT TRAP (PG)

Disney rehearses its 1961 heart-warmer in this story of twin sisters' efforts to reunite their parents. West End: Clapham Picture House, Hammersmith Virgin, Odeon Camden Town, Odeon Kensington, Odeon Marble Arch, Odeon Swiss Cottage, Odeon West End, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Chelsea

THE PRINCE OF EGYPT (U)

In plumping his cartoon life of Moses, DreamWorks honcho Jeffrey Katzenberg envisaged it "painted by Claude Monet and photographed by David Lean". The end result winds up as *The Ten Commandments* by way of *Joseph and his Technicolor Dreamcoat*. West End: ABC Baker Street, ABC Tottenham Court Road, Barbican Screen, Clapham Picture House, Elephant & Castle Coronet, Empire Leicester Square, Hammersmith Virgin, Odeon Camden Town, Odeon Kensington, Odeon Marble Arch, Odeon Swiss Cottage, Ritzy Cinema, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Fulham Road, Virgin Trocadero

RUSH HOUR (15)

Rush Hour marries Jackie Chan with a LA backdrop, a jobbing Hollywood director and a wise-cracking black comic in Chris Tucker's huckstering LAPD man. It's a hit-and-miss affair. West End: Hammersmith Virgin, Odeon Camden Town, Odeon Kensington, Odeon Marble Arch, Odeon Swiss Cottage, Ritzy Cinema, UCI Whiteleys, Virgin Chelsea, Virgin Trocadero, Warner Village West End

THE INDEPENDENT RECOMMENDS

THE THREE BEST FILMS

Out of Sight (15)

This tale of love on opposite sides of the law knocks spots off every previous Elmore Leonard adaption, and boasts in George Clooney and Jennifer Lopez the swooniest romantic pairing of the cinematic year.

Antz (PG)

This computer-animated comedy (right), voiced by a stellar cast, stars Woody Allen as worker ant "Z", who becomes an unlikely opponent

of the colony's totalitarian regime when he falls in with Princess Bakla (Sharon Stone).

My Name is Joe (15)

This solid social-realist drama contains all that one would expect from a Ken Loach film - humour, indignation, emotional sympathy - driven by Peter Mullan's intense performance as a recovering alcoholic.

ANTHONY QUINN

CINEMA
WEST END

ABC BAKER STREET (0870-902 0418) \oplus Baker Street Babe: Pig in the City 1.20pm, 6.10pm, The Prince of Egypt 1.40pm, 4pm, 6.20pm, 8.35pm What Dreams May Come 3.40pm, 4pm, 8.30pm

ABC PANTON STREET (0870-902 0404) \oplus Piccadilly Circus Babe: Pig in the City 1.20pm, 6.10pm, The Last Days of Disco 1.40pm, 3.40pm, 6pm, 8.25pm Lock Stock & Two Smoking Barrels 1.10pm, 3.35pm, 6pm, 8.30pm A Perfect Murder 1.05pm, 4.30pm, 6.20pm, 8.40pm

ABC PICCADILLY (0171-387 4322) (from 1pm) \oplus Piccadilly Circus Hamam: The Turkish Bath 1.25pm, 3.30pm, 6.10pm, 8.35pm Slums of Beverly Hills 1.35pm, 3.50pm, 6.10pm, 8.45pm

ABC SHAFTESBURY AVENUE (0870-902 0402) \oplus Leicester Square/Baker Street Babe: Pig in the City 1.20pm, 6.10pm, 8.35pm What Dreams May Come 1.05pm, 3.40pm, 6pm, 8.30pm

ABC SWISS CENTRE (0870-902 0403) \oplus Leicester Square/Baker Street Babe: Pig in the City 1.20pm, 6.10pm, 8.35pm The Ed 1.30pm, 3.35pm, 6.45pm, 8.30pm The Governess 1.20pm, 3.45pm, 6.15pm, 8.35pm La Vie Révise des Anges 1.15pm, 3.35pm, 6.15pm, 8.35pm

ABC TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD (0870-902 0414) \oplus Tottenham Court Road Babe: Pig in the City 1.20pm, 3.40pm, 6.15pm, 8.35pm The Prince of Egypt 1.05pm, 3.45pm, 6.25pm, 8.40pm My Name is Joe 6.30pm, 9.15pm The Prince of Egypt 1.15pm, 3.55pm, 6.30pm, 8.15pm

ABC SWISS COTTAGE (0870-905 0007) \oplus Swiss Cottage Babe: Pig in the City 1.20pm, 6.10pm, 8.35pm The Mask of Zorro 1.20pm, 3.45pm, 6.20pm, 8.30pm The Parent Trap 1.25pm, 3.45pm, 6.25pm, 8.30pm

PEPSI MAXIM CINEMA (0171-494 4153) \oplus Piccadilly Circus Everest 2.40pm, 4.45pm, 7pm, 9.05pm T-Rex: Back to the Cretaceous (3-D) 1.10am, 3.35pm, 3.45pm, 4.50pm, 6pm, 8.05pm

ODEON WEST END (08705-050007) \oplus Leicester Square Babe: Pig in the City 1.20pm, 3.20pm, 5.30pm, 7.30pm The Parent Trap 12.05pm, 2.45pm

ODEON SWISS COTTAGE (08705-050007) \oplus Swiss Cottage Babe: Pig in the City 1.20pm, 6.10pm, 8.35pm The Mask of Zorro 1.20pm, 3.45pm, 6.20pm, 8.30pm The Parent Trap 1.25pm, 3.50pm, 6.15pm, 8.30pm

ODEON BAKER STREET (0171-897 4002) \oplus Baker Street Babe: Pig in the City 1.20pm, 6.10pm, 8.35pm The Mask of Zorro 1.20pm, 3.45pm, 6.20pm, 8.30pm The Parent Trap 1.25pm, 3.50pm, 6.15pm, 8.30pm

ODEON SWISS COTTAGE (0171-897 2772) \oplus Baker Street Babe: Pig in the City 1.20pm, 6.10pm, 8.35pm The Mask of Zorro 1.20pm, 3.45pm, 6.20pm, 8.30pm The Parent Trap 1.25pm, 3.50pm, 6.15pm, 8.30pm

SCREEN ON BAKER STREET (0171-935 2772) \oplus Baker Street Babe: Pig in the City 1.20pm, 6.10pm, 8.35pm The Mask of Zorro 1.20pm, 3.45pm, 6.20pm, 8.30pm The Parent Trap 1.25pm, 3.50pm, 6.15pm, 8.30pm

SCREEN ON THE HILL (0171-435 3366) \oplus Belsize Park Left Luggage 4.40pm, The Mighty 2.40pm, 6.50pm, 8pm

SCREEN ON GREEN (0171-226 3520) \oplus Angel/Highbury Babe: Pig in the City 1.20pm, 6.10pm, 8.35pm The Prince of Egypt 1.15pm, 3.45pm, 5.15pm, 7.15pm My Name is Joe 4.30pm, 9.30pm

CLAPHAM PICTURE HOUSE (0171-498 3323) \oplus Clapham Common Babe: Pig in the City 1.20pm, 6.20pm, 8pm The Prince of Egypt 1.15pm, 3.45pm, 5.15pm, 7.15pm The Parent Trap 1.20pm, 3.45pm, 6.15pm, 8.30pm

CURZON MAYFAIR (0171-369 1720) \oplus Green Park Dancing at Lughnasa 4.30pm, 9pm Philadelphia Story 2pm, 6.30pm

CURZON SOHO (0171-734 2255) (12pm-6pm) \oplus Leicester Square/Tottenham Court Road Casablanca 2pm, 4.45pm, 7pm, 9.10pm Elizabeth 1.45pm, 6.45pm, 8.45pm, 9.20pm La Vie Révise des Anges 1.15pm, 3.15pm, 5.15pm, 7.15pm My Name is Joe 4.30pm, 9.30pm

EMPIRE LESTER SOHARE (0990-888990) \oplus Leicester Square Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas 12.40pm, 4.35pm, 6.10pm, 9pm Out of Sight 12.10pm, 2.55pm, 5.50pm, 8.35pm The Prince of Egypt 1.45pm, 3.45pm, 5.45pm, 7.45pm My Name is Joe 1.45pm, 3.45pm, 5.45pm, 7.45pm

ODEON AND CASTLE CORONET (0171-703 4968) \oplus Elephant & Castle The Mask of Zorro phone for times What Dreams May Come phone for times

ODEON KINSEY (0171-727 4043) \oplus Notting Hill Gate The Mighty 4.45pm, 6.55pm, 8.30pm

HAMMERSMITH VIRGIN (0870-907 0718) \oplus Ravenscourt Park Is This the City 1.20pm, 6.10pm, 8.35pm The Mask of Zorro 1.20pm, 3.45pm, 6.20pm, 8.30pm The Parent Trap 1.20pm, 3.45pm, 6.20pm, 8.30pm

ODEON MEZZANINE (0171-727 4043) \oplus Elephant & Castle The Mask of Zorro 1.20pm, 3.45pm, 6.20pm, 8.30pm The Prince of Egypt 1.15pm, 3.45pm, 5.45pm, 7.45pm My Name is Joe 1.15pm, 3.45pm, 5.45pm, 7.45pm

ODEON KINSEY (0171-727 4043) \oplus Notting Hill Gate The Mighty 4.45pm, 6.55pm, 8.30pm

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MONDAY RADIO

RADIO 1

(97.6-99.8MHz FM)
7.00 Chris Moyles. **10.00** Radio 1's All Time National Anthems.
6.00 The Best of Lamaco Live.
12.00 The Breezeblock. **2.00** Emma B. **4.0-7.0** Clive Warren.

RADIO 2

(88.902MHz FM)
6.00 Mo Dutta: The Dawn Patrol: news, views and music. **8.05** Sarah Kennedy. **10.00** Steve Wright's Million Sellers. **12.00** Alan Freeman. **2.00** Red's Simply Soulful Christmas: Mick Hucknall picks his favourite records for Christmas and reveals which artists have influenced his career. **3.00** The Festive Jukebox. **5.00** Johnnie Walker. **7.00** Humphrey Lyttelton. **8.00** Big Band Christmas Special. **8.30** Jools Holland Christmas Special. **9.30** In the Days before Rock 'n' Roll. **10.30** Bob Harris. **12.00** Katrina Leskanich. **3.0-4.0** Nicky Horne.

RADIO 3

(90.2-92.4MHz FM)
6.00 On Air.
9.00 Masterworks.
10.30 Artist of the Week.
11.00 Sound Stories.
12.00 Composer of the Week: Camille Saint-Saëns.
1.00 The Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert.
2.00 The BBC Orchestras.
3.50 The Harmonic Series.
4.00 Mozart Voices.
4.45 Music to Die For.
5.00 A Medieval Christmas.
5.30 Music Rooms.
6.00 Discovering Music with Leonard Slatkin.
7.00 Cabaret Cocktails. See *Pick of the Day*.
7.30 Performance on 3. Another chance to hear ten of the most memorable concerts of the 1998 BBC Proms season at the Royal Albert Hall, London. 6: Prom 72, given on 11 September. Ruth Zesak (soprano), Bernarda Fink (contralto), Herbert Lippert (tenor), Neal Davies (bass), Arnold Schoenberg Choir, Chamber Orchestra of Europe/Nikolaus Harnoncourt. Beethoven: Missa solemnis. (R)
9.00 Postscript. Peter Holland talks to ten Shakespeare experts about the Bard today. 1: Shake-

PICK OF THE DAY

WITH DIARIES, short stories and readings, Alan Bennett (right) now seems to have become a firmly established part of the Christmas ritual. Today he begins an atmospheric five-part reading of *Peter Pan* and Wendy (9.45am R4 FM).

Another national treasure gets analysed in *Postscript* (9pm R3). This evening, our continuing fascination with the Bard's life

is explored by his most recent biographer, Park Honan, and Katherine Duncan-Jones, who edited the Sonnets.

After last week's "Christmas Cocktails", we get *Cabaret Cocktails* (7pm R3) with Noël Coward, et al; alas, the wordless purity of the originals is sullied by Robert Cushman's commentary, and it's just not the same.

ROBERT HANKS



6.00 Six O'Clock News.

6.30 I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue.

7.00 NEWS: The Archers.

7.45 Front Row: 'The Stephen King Interview'. In his first radio interview for many years, the world's best-selling author talks to Mark Lawson about a life of horror. (R)

7.45 Under One Roof. The second of three five-part dramatisations from the Michael Hanson stories. As New Year approaches, everyone feels rather fragile.

There may be a few broken bones - and even hearts - before 1 January dawns. With Janet Maw, Edna Dore and Luisa Bradshaw-White. Director Marilyn Imrie (1/5).

8.00 NEWS: Brass Barmy. Natalie Wheen visits music-mad Wardie High School, which has no less than ten brass bands and countless ensembles. (R)

8.30 Analysis. 'The Truth is Inside You'. As we unravel the human genome, we also gain knowledge which might be too hot to handle. Ian Hargreaves asks how this scientific revolution will affect both the way we see ourselves and the way we organise society.

9.00 NEWS: Nature: A Wolf to the North. Heading north into the Alaskan interior, Jim Crumley uncovers the bitter controversy surrounding the hunting of wolves inside Alaska's most famous nature reserve, Denali National Park. He forced to examine his own prejudices over hunting the animals that symbolise all he loves.

9.30 Start the Week. Jeremy Paxman and guests set the cultural agenda for the week.

10.00 NEWS: The World Tonight. With Sue Cameron.

10.45 Book at Bedtime: Five Dials. 1: 'Mrs Bixby and the Colonel's Coat' by Roald Dahl.

2: 'The Man without the Mobile'.

11.30 The Bells of Russia.

12.00 NEWS.

12.30 The Late Book: The Re-

straint of Beasts.

12.45 Shipping Forecast.

1.00 World Service.

5.35 Shipping Forecast.

5.40 Inshore Forecast.

5.45 Prayer for the Day.

5.47 - 6.00 Farming Today.

RADIO 4 (92.4-94.6MHz FM)

6.00 Today.

9.00 NEWS: Start the Week.

9.45 Serial: Peter Pan and Wendy. See *Pick of the Day*.

10.00 NEWS: Woman's Hour.

11.00 NEWS: Dear Peter Pan. (R)

11.30 My Gailey Girls.

12.00 NEWS: You and Yours.

1.00 The World at One.

1.30 Counterpoint.

2.00 NEWS: The Archers.

2.15 NEWS: Afternoon Play: Open Secrets.

3.00 Money Box Live.

3.30 The Small Ad. (R)

3.45 Nay, Ivy, Nay.

4.00 NEWS: The Food Programme.

4.30 Turning World.

5.00 PM.

5.57 Weather.

6.00 Six O'Clock News.

6.30 I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue.

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RADIO 4 LW (198kHz LW)

9.45 - 10.00 Daily Service.

10.00 - 12.04 News Headlines: Shipping Forecast. **5.54 - 5.57** Shipping Forecast. **12.00 - 7.00** Test Match Special.

RADIO 4 LIVE (693, 909kHz MW)

7.00 Breakfast.

9.00 Brian Hayes.

12.00 The Midday News.

1.00 Bank Holiday Sport on 5.

RADIO 4 LW (198kHz LW)

9.45 - 10.00 Daily Service.

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